DESTRUCTION

OF THE

EDUCATION MONSTER

The Destruction of America's Public School System

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I would like to thank Jim Garvey, Ed.D, for sharing his 50 years of educational experience with me. The discussions and time we spent together over several months were enlightening and certainly give credit to his devotion to the field and study of education. Garvey transcends several generations, which clearly gives us a view of American education that we now take for granted. He remembers a time when American public schools worked, teachers were respected, and discipline and values were instilled. Garvey worked as a public school teacher through the 1940s, 1950s and as an administrator through the 1960s and 1970s, as well as an adjunct professor at Chapman College, Pepperdine University, and University of Southern California. And even after his retirement, he stayed active and remained involved in the study of America's declining public school system.

Thank you, Jim. I have enjoyed our countless discussions and have valued your guidance.

Hank Kraychir

Preface

Many, if not most, American public schools are failing our children because they are controlled, and subsequently organized, by way of a bureaucratic and monopolistic model. Yet, the idea that a voucher system could disassemble the education monster has, perhaps, remained the most viable option available today. In short, voucher advocates say good old competition will resolve what troubles our public education system. However, those who believe in the education monster maintain that switching to a voucher plan will dissolve an American institution and will not guarantee a quality education for this country's children.

We say nonsense. This scare tactic is a ploy by the education monster and her allies. Regrettably, we readily admit that there is no single answer available to the underserved American student. But unlike the education monster, we do not advocate continuing a system that is failing this nation's best and brightest. To be certain, there are many solutions to this unique problem, several of which we will discuss in this book.

There is certainly plenty of money to go around. The basis for a voucher system is that each student would be allotted a dollar amount, similar to what is currently paid for a child's education by each state. In essence, if the state paid a public school $11,000 a year, the student would be eligible for a similar amount under a voucher plan. The money would be attached to each student, thereby allowing charter, private, online, and even public schools to recruit and participate in the education of this nation's children. Each state would determine an amount equivalent to what it currently pays its public schools, although based on an apparent need each state's legislature could adjust accordingly.

For those who think that private schools could not afford to educate a child for the same amount as those in public schools, they would, of course, be mistaken. As a whole, most private schools actually do a better job of handling money than their public school counterparts. Additionally, if private enterprise knew the state would pay an $11,000 fee to educate a child, private schools would be opening up in droves to handle the public school exodus. This possible system, however, does not preclude public schools from also recruiting students; it just gives the student the option to exit if dissatisfied – something a student cannot do under the current monopoly.

We also recognize that not every public school is failing this nation's children, particularly those students that come from middle to upper-class white communities. In those rare cases that a public school is working, we say offer a voucher program anyway, thereby safeguarding the quality of public education through competition. Yet, as long as higher amounts of money continue to go to wealthier white communities, which is certain under our current system of property tax allocation, we say that good old competition and American ingenuity should be applied to solve a broken system of serving America's underprivileged students, who are trapped in public schools that no longer work.

We understand the generational affection most Americans have from their days in public schools, but this fondness and resulting support for these types of schools are slowly declining. Let's face it, the majority of schools that work are mostly middle to

upper-class white schools, and because most white students get a decent education, and because of white parental partiality, support for public schools remains high in these communities. But our system is proportional to local property taxes, which gives these white communities an advantage that poorer communities don't have.

Now, we are not suggesting we do away with this type of taxation; rather, we are saying that it is unfair, and even un-American, to force minority and poor white school children to have to go to schools that are failing them.

This book will prove there are alternative forms of education available to each and every community in the United States, if only the will and desire were present to implement such programs. We believe that the basis for this change is a free market system based on vouchers. In essence, each student would have a monetary value assigned to him or her – say $11,000 per school year, which is the current minimum national average to educate a child in the United States. Wherever the student wanted to go to school, that school could charge the resident state an amount for educating a child. This potential system would certainly include public schools, but it would also include charter, private, and online schools – and even homeschooled children.

You see, it is competition that will solve the problem with our current monopolized public school system. Teachers and administrators would no longer take their privileged student count for granted. Parents and students would be empowered once again, and the choices they would be able to make would be the tools for real educational change in the United States.

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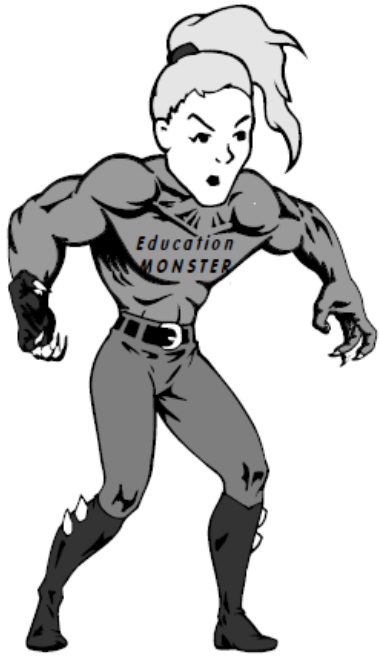
Chapter 1

Villains and Vanquishers

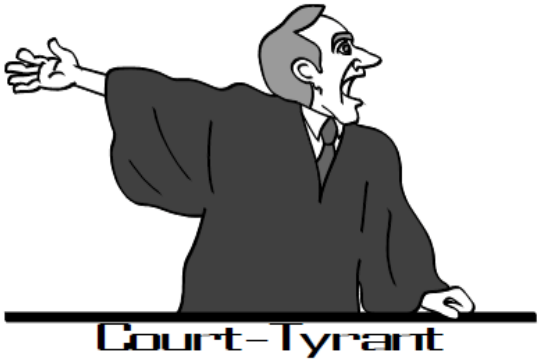
Villains in Our Story

One may smile, and smile, and be a villain.
– William Shakespeare



Education Monster: defender of traditional public education. She is the embodiment of power and corruption in public schools today.

Government Goon: a state or federal governing body that defends traditional public education as the primary solution to educating children.

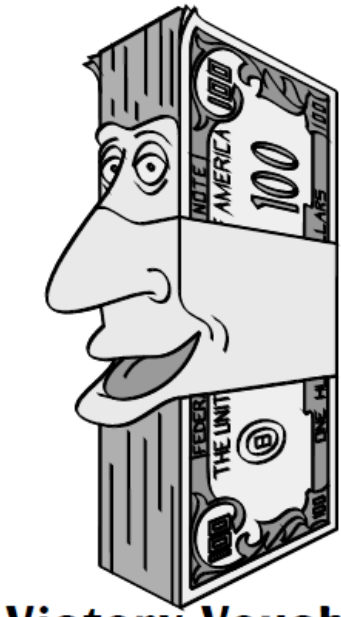


Court Tyrant: any judge that legislates a ruling defending public education as the only way to educate a child.

Press Tormenter: media outlets that support public education and misrepresent alternative education.

Vanquishers in Our Story

A hero is an ordinary individual who finds the strength
to persevere and endure in spite of overwhelming obstacles.
– Christopher Reeve



Victory Voucher: supporter of school vouchers to fix the problems with our current monopolistic public school system.

Free Market Freedom: supporter of free market solutions to solve monopolistic control of public schools today.

Privileged Private: supports the idea a parent or guardian should have a choice as to whether they can send their child to a charter, private or online school, or Homeschool them as an alternative to our current public school monopoly.

Optional Online: a supporter of using online technology and incorporating online education whenever possible.

Homeschool Hero: she represents a parent or guardians choice to homeschool without restrictions from any state or federal agency.

Chapter 2

Introduction

If You Want to Know what it is like to be a 16th Century Heretic,
Just Speak Out Against Public Education. – Unknown source

The Three Stooges of American Public Education
Hear No Evil, See No Evil, and Speak No Evil

Dr. Garvey and I honestly believe that the current public education crisis is one of structure, rather than expenditure or lack of teacher preparedness. Plainly stated, public schools are failing our children because they are organized according to a socialistic model rather than on a free market economy. Public schools have a monopoly that is based on generational perceptions of need. But like any monopoly, such thinking leads to an uncompetitive environment.

Our economy is based on free economic competition; however, our public schools are not, nor were they ever meant to be. Our public schools were based on the factory model of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, which also did not involve self-determination as we know it today. Our public schools were only meant to give our students a basic education, which would make men good farmers or factory workers. Women, too, had even less opportunity than that of men.

For the same reason that socialist economies around the world fail, America's centrally planned schools are failing. The weight and burden of any monopoly allows a system to go unchecked, as is the case with public education today.

We would, however, be remiss if it was not mentioned that some public schools are having remarkable success. However, these success stories are regional and often in middle to upper class white communities. Case in point – it was reported in 2008 that Detroit's public schools had a graduation rate of only 24.9%, which was one of the nation's worst. However, Detroit was not alone; in fact, 17 of this nation's 50 biggest cities had high school graduation rates of less than 50%, including 30.5% for Indianapolis and 34.1% for Cleveland. And like other areas across the United States, public education continues to fail this nation's children.

How do we, as good stewards of this nation's future, continue to say that everything is OK, especially when we hear that students who live in Baltimore's suburbs graduate 81.5% of its students, while only 34.6% of the students in the city of Baltimore graduate? Clearly, white parents and students have adapted and for the most part support public education in the suburbs, especially with graduation rates of more than 80%.

However, poor white, Black and Latino students have few options. They can't afford to move to the suburbs, they can't switch from their violent schools and the pressures to conform to failure, so they just quit or do their time and hope for the best. Nonetheless, middle-class and wealthy families know that they can simply move into and out of a school district once it is clear or it becomes clear their children's educational needs are not being met.

The tragedy is that many of America's schools have become a cesspool of gangs, drugs and violence. Clearly, until our boards of education decide to take back our public schools and fire those students (yes, students) who disrupt or don't want to add to the American educational experience, our schools will continue to fail.

With low graduate assessment scores and children failing to get even the most basic education, isn't it clear that, as a mass, these students are telling us something? They are telling us that they no longer believe in the education fairy tale, but rather that the system has become an education monster.

If we continue our current way of educating this nation's children, the divide between rich and poor, white, Black and Latino students will continue to grow with each passing year. Our support of the education monster tells the silent minority that we no longer believe in your capability, we no longer believe that poor whites, Blacks and Latino students are capable of success and that if you want the American dream, you had better steal it, because there is no other way you will attain success. In short, support of the education monster is nothing more than child endangerment and neglect in many communities in the United States.

Education use to be a way to earn a better life, but it is clear that not everyone is equal. If our public school system is not equal, how can we expect our students to think of themselves as having an equal opportunity?

There are few doubts that student results are directly related to economics. Middle-class and rich white areas have no problem raising bond money or hiring the best-qualified teachers, and often display beautifully sculpted modern campuses. All one has to do is look at overcrowded urban schools vs. suburban schools. Most urban public schools are old and run down, whereas many suburban public schools are new. Poor white and minority students are the majority in most urban school districts, while middle class and rich white students are the majority in most suburban schools.

Our culture feels sorry for these poor, white and minority students, so we don't hold them accountable. Our schools used to pass them along, but now we are testing them and recording student failures that have actually existed for decades, which have forced many students, who know the education game is fixed, to quit. Our children are talking and reacting in violent ways, but we are not listening. It is all too easy to say that Black, Latino and poor white students don't care, but could they be telling us something or are we just not listening?

The gap between the have's-and-have-nots is growing each and every year, and our negligence is creating a permanent underclass that will eventually turn on the system that failed them.

How can we ask an uneducated population to support local, regional or even federal agencies, including our public schools, if the system failed to educate them on the reasons for patriotism, responsibility and loyalty. These personal traits are not innate; they are taught through study and communication with those who have gone there before. If the before is only failure, then failure is what will be taught to the next generation.

We were once taught to trust all things governmental, that our institutions are for the betterment of our people. However, a major flaw in this thinking is that governing bodies, like public schools, are often made up of people who have their self-interest in mind and don't always think about the welfare of the nation. And in order to survive, the authority of public education turns its power on those who speak out against it, which is where we are now.

The significant question of why public schools don't work must be included in the discussion. In essence, the public school system that was initiated in the early 1900s was based on a bureaucratic, one way works best for everyone method. And just like the factory worker who made widgets by the millions, young factory workers were taught to tow the line, work hard, listen to instructions, and be loyal to the factory. There is, of course, a major defect with this type of thinking and teaching. Our factories have moved overseas and we no longer need widget workers to think inside a box.

We are now asking a larger and larger segment of our population to think outside the box; as such, college education is the new goal for every student in public schools. Yet, our education system was never based on such thinking. We are now asking a widget-making schoolteacher to turn out academics. That is like asking an early twentieth century factory to develop microchips for computers. This impossible task is clearly demonstrated each time we ask our public schools to turnout more and more college students, only to find that a system for making widgets, which was made a hundred years ago, is the primary tool for educating today's children.

Market forces turned our once mighty industrial factories into graveyards; consequently, we no longer need widget workers, but we keep developing them instead of microchip workers. Everyone must wonder, what is the educational level of the Chinese peasants who now work in the factories that once gave employment to millions in the United States?

How much education does the Chinese government require for their factory widget workers? Very little, we think.

Could there be a direct relationship between the decline and out crying for jobs and the retooling of the United States? Certainly – this is exactly our point.

The need for factory widget workers led to the development of public education as we know it, and the changing employment crisis is asking too much of a system developed for widget workers.

Yet, America's private schools have always been different. These schools hold students to academic and behavioral standards that do not exist in most public schools. Teachers and administrators know well that if a student is disruptive, they will be punished and even expelled at a certain point. Many of these teachers do not mind being paid less than most public school districts pay. Everyone knows that it is a privilege to be a part of the experience, and none of these teachers want to go back to the dreaded public school system. This threat alone keeps most teachers, administrators, parents, and students in line.

Public schools used to have a backbone, but this is no longer the case. Our system now feels sorry for the poor, alienated and disenfranchised public school student, so much so that we have thrown out the baby with the bathwater. We now cater to the troublemaker, the squeaky wheel and the cog in the system. Because of an impenetrable bulwark of legalities that make any internal reform impossible, we are calling for the destruction of the education monster; otherwise, it will continue to erode the dream of a greater America.

Public schools have become susceptible to special interests, most notably the teachers' unions. But like factory workers who once had the support of mighty unions, the demise of the NEA and other related unions will fall as well. When a union puts the self-interest of the education monster above the quality of the students' education, the weight of such beliefs will always fail. All we have to do is look at the loss of America's once mighty automotive industry and the fall of the unions that supported factory workers' rights over product development to find the answer to why the NEA is selfishly defending the education monster that feeds it.

Can failing public schools be reformed? Possibly, although without certain market forces being installed, such reforms will inevitably fail. The student must be considered a customer, with satisfaction in mind. Currently, satisfaction with our public schools is at an all-time low and will remain so until the education monster is destroyed.

Our public education system must give parents and students a choice, which will bring market forces into public education. As long as the education monster maintains a monopoly over student education, nothing will occur to alter its current behavior. Only market forces will make the needed changes to public education.

What would happen if a public high school woke up on a September day to realize that half of its customers – its students – have transferred to a charter, private or online school, or turned to homeschooling? The shock wave would reverberate throughout the community. Like the once mighty factory workers of America who thought their jobs were secure, teachers and administrators would be thrust into the unusual position of having to justify their position, something that does not happen today. Those who remained on the job would feel lucky, but remain scared – so scared that they would do the best job possible. All of a sudden, student satisfaction would be their highest priority, only because they couldn't afford to lose any more customers – students. And those teachers who lost their public school jobs would

apply at the newly opened charter, private and online schools under a whole new educational environment.

For several years, students might go back and forth between these newly formed schools, but like any dissatisfied customer, the student would eventually find a comfortable institution for further learning. There will, of course, be some customers who will never be satisfied, but at least there are options, which do not exist for most students today.

We strongly believe that this nation needs to empower parents and students into being stewards of their education, but this change will only come through choice and free market forces. Likewise, we must also be willing to give parents and students autonomy to make an informed decision.

However, autonomy must also be given to charter, private and online schools, as well as homeschool parents, only because unless such freedom is granted, the education monster will use its allies – the court tyrant, press tormentor and government goon – to hinder these new market forces and academic freedoms, especially in the remaining public schools. Everyone must be reminded that the education monster will never stop and will use its allies to defeat any freedom of choice. The education monster will also use its political influence with the government goon to destroy any threat to its survival unless federal and state mandates clearly express autonomy.

These newly formed independent schools must be given autonomy, only answerable to their board of directors for required curriculums; likewise, each board of directors will be answerable to market forces. As well, local public school boards must also be freed from state and federal regulations that now tie their hands.

The education monster will never freely allow market forces into its domain. According to its doctrine, the public sector must never be allowed to have options; otherwise, the education monster's purpose as an instrument of control will be lost. And unless such academic freedoms are forthcoming for public, charter and private schools, we say destroy the education monster completely. However, if the monster can be tamed through competitive market forces of a voucher plan, by all means allow the competition to start, which would benefit the American educational experience tremendously.

The ideals of a free market economy are nothing new to us, so why are we so afraid to allow this type of change to occur? Free market education would allow students, parents, teachers and administrators to become allies, whereas our current system will continue to remain adversarial and benefit only the education monster and those who support its control.

The new goal of education will lie in the hands of free market forces and local needs. If the federal and state governments want to get into the school system and develop a market-driven school for a specific purpose, they can legislate funding for such a school and recruit students and teachers like public and private, charter and online schools would do. Federal and state governments can create magnet schools for specific purposes, or allow the free market to do it. If there is a need for scientists, magnet science high schools can be created to help fill this void. If a need for local auto mechanics is present, private magnet high schools can also be developed, and so forth and so on.

These schools must, however, never be allowed to become diploma mills, like our current public school system. Each state would require each school to gain and

maintain regional certification, much like our high schools and colleges currently do. The state must never allow payment to a failing school, even if it means the students' education will be disrupted.

The simplest and most effective way to create a system for educational change and choice is under a voucher plan. Under such a plan, the state would give the parent or guardian of every child a voucher to be spent on educational services at any public, charter, private or online school, or as a homeschooled student in the state they lived in. Public schools would also honor the voucher as full payment, although private schools would be free to charge a larger or lesser amount if they chose to do so, which would allow even more of a variety in our new educational system.

We do not assume to have all the answers, but we try to lay a foundation for any state or public school district that wishes to start a local process for more educational accountability. This book was specifically written as an impetus for educational reform, knowing well that public school districts are accountable to their community and any reform cannot be mandated from a central authority. The needs and desires of each community are different. Each community has specific needs and economic forces; as such, each community should make adjustments according to a free market economy, not a planned system from Washington, D.C.

There has to be an alternative.

Chapter 3

The Blame Game

When you blame others, you give up your power to change. – Robert Anthony

Are we a country of blamers? As a whole, we like to blame others for our situation in life, and to some degree, there is merit in such thinking. However, especially when it comes to adult decisions, most fault lies in one's own individual decision-making ability.

With that said, conversely, we are only as good as the education or life experiences we have received, and the United States is only as good as the collective educational experiences we have gained. As such, the collective educational experience this country has and continues to receive is nothing to brag about. Luckily, our system of education and government is arranged in such a way that the best and brightest quickly rise to positions of power and authority, which gives us a solid backing. Yet, on the other hand, we are not collectively taking full advantage of this country's potential, which only fuels the education debate.

Let's face it – the educational system we have come to rely on was made to develop factory workers, farmers and good citizens. Beyond that, it is ill-equipped to handle the modern and changing world. And if we are not willing to adapt, and adapt quickly, we might very well become a dead empire, like Rome of old.

The possible demise of the United States, as we know it, is the fuel that drives the education argument. Industry complains we do not have enough qualified workers. College professors complain that the students entering require basic skill instruction. High school teachers complain that children are not interested. Junior high school teachers complain that students are unruly and are unwilling to sit still long enough to learn. Elementary teachers complain that children do not come into school with enough skills to learn quickly. And students blame teachers at almost every level. The end result is what we call the blame game.

On June 14, 2007, Diane Ravitch of the *New York Sun* said,

> When the time comes to talk about solutions, the conversation and the remedies always seem to focus on teachers. The line goes like this: Our students are not learning because our teachers are not smart enough, are lazy, don't care, get paid regardless of their effectiveness, and so on…It's time to stop beating up on teachers and ask why so many of our children arrive in school with poor attitudes toward learning. If the students aren't willing to work hard, if they aren't hungry to succeed, then even the best teachers in the world — laden with merit pay, bonuses, and other perks — are not going to make them learn.

At the 81st Annual National Council for the Social Studies Conference on November 16-18, 2001, Perry M. Marker, a professor from Sonoma State University, said,

> We blame teachers for the 'failure' of the schools. We blame them on a lot of levels. We blame their professional education; we blame what they teach; we blame how they teach. The simplistic, and punitive reform efforts regarding high stakes testing reflect the fact that teachers have been blamed for all that is wrong with education, and students are being punished for it…Since teachers are to blame for most of what is "wrong" with education, we now have punished students through the introduction of standards and high stakes testing: a racist, one-size-fits-all approach that is designed to present a singular and simplistic view of knowledge, truth and learning which ignores the diverse needs of our children of color and those who live in poverty. These 'reform' efforts in education are intended to blame teachers and punish students for the problems of education by mandating a focus on drill and practice, and 'teaching to the test,' instead of fostering students' critical thinking skills. With efforts to blame teachers and punish students, we are relinquishing control of the classroom and curriculum solely to those who construct the tests.

Here is a simple list, which Dr. Garvey has laid out for us,

Educational progression of blaming:

> College professors blame the high school teachers.
> High school teachers blame the middle school teachers.
> Middle school teachers blame the elementary school teachers.
> Elementary teachers blame the parents.

In addition, we should add to this list that parents blame each level of education for their children's lack of skills. By the time children are full-grown adults, they are so used to blaming others, they go through life playing the blame game, and teach it to their children. We say, STOP!

What came first – the chicken or the egg? We are not 100% certain where the blame game problem started, but we are certain that a truce is required, and that another plan be laid out for success.

That is why we are calling for the destruction of the education monster. Collectively, we have tried and tried to work within the current system and each and every time, the education monster has failed us. Things are not getting better; they are, in fact, slowly deteriorating. It is now time for the blame game to stop. Let's start talking about solutions.

Sonoma State's Marker said it best,

> Let's stop blaming teachers and punishing students for the educational politics of neglect…If the last twenty years are any indicator, politicians don't have the solutions to the education reform. Let's demand that those who are most invested in education – families and teachers – have a voice in determining the course of educational reform.

We believe there is only one solution – empower parents and guardians to make educational decisions for their own child's education through an independent voucher system. Yes, we should mandate children go to school, but we should no longer require them to go to a system that will only shackle them into a life of failure.

This will put the responsibility for educating a child where it belongs, not on the state or a public school system and its teachers, but on the laps of parents and students, where it belongs.

There has to be an alternative.

Chapter 4

Industry Has Changed, So Why Hasn't Education Also Changed?

It is not the strongest of the species that survives,
nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change.
– Charles Darwin

Often, due to rising costs, our factories have been updated and in many cases, moved overseas. In order for a factory to survive in the United States today, technology must be employed; otherwise, the factory is simply moved to another country, where cheaper labor can be employed.

There is little doubt that our culture is driven by consumer satisfaction. The general American consumer has gotten used to the idea that quality does not have to be sacrificed and that cheaper is often better. Just look at the success of Wal-Mart and how this single chain of stores has changed American consuming habits.

Simply stated, the American economy drives social habits, yet for nostalgic, emotional reasons, the American public has remained loyal to the ideals of public education. To date, and because of a long-held principle belief in public education – often because so many American's have fond memories from their early life experiences – no one wants to call for the ending of an American institution.

Nonetheless, the demise of public education as we know it is inevitable. Like most significant social events, change will not come willingly, but will be forced upon the education monster. The needed change will not come from within, but rather from outside of the public school establishment. And like the downfall of older American industries, change will be made by economic forces and the unwillingness of students, parents and, perhaps most importantly, taxpayers who see no value in maintaining the status quo.

We as American consumers demand quality, and if it is not given, we take our purchasing power elsewhere. On the other hand, when it comes to educating our youngest and most precious assets, the American public has remained loyal to an archaic institution in spite of our children's message of discontentment.

Those parents that can afford better schools have never had a problem educating their children. These parents demand accountability and when it is not received, they move their children to another school. Likewise, private schools hold the threat of expulsion over any student who does not meet the institution's behavioral and academic requirements. A simple threat of expulsion is often all that is needed to keep a child and a parent, who prizes the school, in order. Unfortunately, this natural balance does not exist in most public schools.

As Lawton's Board of Education recently learned, such thinking might not be too far away. To the dissatisfaction of many school district officials who will soon be losing their jobs, the voters within the community of Lawton, Oklahoma, voted no in May 2008 to a proposed $33.5 million bond. There are, of course, many reasons why voters disapproved of the requested bond issue, but certainly the displeasure with student outcome had to have been at the top of the list.

Dissatisfaction is perhaps the key component to this discussion. Many American's realized in the 1970s that they could purchase a quality foreign vehicle for much less than an American-built car, and within three decades Japanese carmakers have made the once-prized auto industry of the United States a graveyard of its former glory.

There are, of course, many reasons for this sad chapter of American history, but most certainly global competition forced a reluctant auto industry to change its all-assuming way of doing business. Global market forces are changing the once-mighty factories of the United States and in order to survive, especially those that have high labor costs, many must move overseas or south of the border.

Education is also going global. In fact, one study stated that in 2005-2006 there were more than 220,000 American college students studying abroad, while during the same year there were more than 580,000 foreign college students studying in the United States. This educational experience also includes the high school ranks; as such, on average about 30,000 American high school students participate in a world student exchange program each year.

This free market educational experience is without a doubt a success. Just as our industrial might has gone global, so too have certain parts of America's educational experience.

With the growth of online college education, more and more foreign students are attending American institutions of learning. The idea is simple; students can stay in their home country, not have to deal with visa problems, and get a highly prized American college education.

The online college degree also has had other benefits, like those of our fighting men and women in the United States military. These soldiers can actually take accredited classes while they are overseas, which will count towards a degree.

And perhaps the most popular option today is the American worker who wants to improve his or her employment skills. The adult learner in the United States has embraced the online option, basically because they can continue to work and raise a family while furthering their education.

The Alfred P. Sloan Foundation gave some sobering statistics about the popularity of online education today. The most amazing number is the fact that there were 3.5 million students who took an online class in 2006, which was a 10% rise from the previous year's results. In 2006, online education had a 9.7% rise compared to 1.5% growth of the overall population increase of higher education. And lastly, about 20% of all students in college took at least one online course in the fall of 2006.

It is clear from the Sloan study and other related data that online education has demonstrated incredible growth. Higher education is, of course, reluctantly embracing this new technology, but with its popular support from willing students, there appears to be no end in sight. Remember, we are a consumer-driven economy; consequently, this type of learning will continue to infiltrate the American education experience, especially as long as there are willing students. It can be predicted, therefore, that the long-term development for online enrollments will continue, in spite of many within academic circles who only support traditional education, like that of the education monster.

Although slow, it appears that the American education model is changing around the education monster. Traditional college educators, who initially supported the education monster, are much more influenced by economics (i.e., via increased enrollment in online classes), whereas the education monster maintains a monopoly over public school education. The growth of online education can be directly related to the adult consumer who is demanding educational options for a busy and demanding lifestyle.

However, college educators would never agree to this type of learning if it did not have a learning component to it, which it does. In fact, online learning, although more convenient, is often much harder than a traditional classroom setting. Most online classes do not have lectures; instead, they require students to read incredible sums of data, which is often backed up with writings, tests and quizzes. Alternately, traditional classroom settings give lectures, require little reading, have few papers to write, if at all, and have multiple-choice exams. In essence, if a student attends a regular classroom and is a good guesser, passing a test and class is often rather easy, whereas no such luxury exists in an online class.

So perhaps the answer to our children being unable to read and write, which they will be forced to do online, lies within an online education? As a minimum, we think a healthy discussion should take place, and this country's students should take some classes online, particularly because we need to find educational savings in the future.

There has to be an alternative.

Chapter 5

If We Fire a Bad Employee, Why Don't We Fire a Bad Student?

The world is a dangerous place, not because of those who do evil,
but because of those who look on and do nothing.
– Albert Einstein

We firmly and unequivocally assert that the purpose of education, especially public education, is to prepare children for adulthood. On the surface, this simple statement might seem agreeable to everyone; however, as this chapter will attest, there are no easy solutions, and agreeing on the word preparedness is, without question, impossible.

It is clear to us that the education monster has coddled students into thinking life is easy and that there are no consequences for their failures and inappropriate actions. When a young man or woman is eventually hired to do a job, certain requirements become immediately evident. These are the same requirements that are seldom enforced in many of our public schools. The young employee is obligated to show up for work on time, wear proper attire, treat other people with respect, not talk back to the employer, refrain from fighting, carry out work, and so forth and so on. These behavioral traits are well established and remain so in the workplace today, only perhaps because a business will lose their valued customers if not treated with respect. In short, if the young employee does not demonstrate the most basic of positive behavioral traits, he or she is immediately terminated (fired).

So, we ask the important question, why does our culture allow business owners to hold an employee responsible, but the education monster does not hold our students responsible?

Our public schools do not fire students; instead, students are pampered into thinking their behavior and lack of efforts are acceptable and that continuing such behavior can derive certain benefits.

Teachers and administrators know well how powerful these unruly children and their parents can be – so much so that the fear of these disruptive students steer the actions of the education monster. The end result is that children learn that negative attention drives social acceptance through peer recognition. Children learn at an early age that little or nothing will be done to the disruptive student, so those students who are most impressionable fall into line and go along to get ahead, or so they think. Eventually, these students learn the truth, but by then it is often times too late to have an impact.

These negative behavioral traits, coupled with other significant factors, have made our once-prized public education system a disgrace and will, in our opinion, lead to the education monster's inevitable demise. In time, the current public education system will only be a shell of its former glory and will be replaced by newer and more productive innovations and technology, but more on them in a later chapter.

In essence, the reason the education monster can get away with not firing our worst students is because our collective public school social experience, up to this point, has been favorable, and people want to believe that our public schools can function again like they did when most Americans went to them.

The ideals of public education are noble and are not in dispute; on the other hand, we must be reminded that a nation is only as strong as its weakest link. As well, there is no dismissing the fact that public education will continue to be linked to the American experience, but this does not mean it will, or should, remain stagnate to the changes of society, as will become clearer in the pages ahead.

The American story is one of constant change. Yet, this change has not always been easy, with many facets of our society falling by the wayside. In fact, public education as we now know it is a relatively new experiment. As the United States entered the 20th century, it looked to the industrial might of its factories for immediate help. Educators found the factory model an economic solution to educating the masses, and for a time it worked successfully. Over time, the American experience and society as a whole has come to rely on the stability of the education monster. Today, the United States looks nothing like it did 100 years ago, yet we insist on educating our children the same way our ancestors were educated.

There are no easy solutions to this problem; nevertheless, blaming students, teachers and administrators for their lack of effort has to stop. It is not the fault of these individuals; rather, it is the fault of the education monster and the system that supports it.

Once autonomy for a child's education is given back to the parent, the burden for learning will be put back into the parent and child's lap. Parents and students will take charge of their education, which will be paid for by an education voucher. In turn, the parent and child will no longer be allowed to blame the education monster for their ill behavior and lack of effort.

Like any consumer, the parent and child will have more options. They may, of course, stay in a more responsive public school, or like many parents and students, want to try homeschooling, or a private, industrial or online school, and so forth and so on. And for those students who continue to think their behavior is acceptable, they might want to think twice. For just as freedom has been given to the parent and student to make a choice, so too will the same option be given to these schools, who will determine what behaviors will be tolerated or not.

The disruptive student will eventually find himself or herself with fewer and fewer options, much like their lack of future employment opportunities. Everyone will learn at an early age that their behavior will guide their depleting choices. One day, the student and parent will learn that because of their ill behavior, there might only be one or two options left, and they won't be the best schools, which could have been theirs if they only acted appropriately.

We say, any educational system that is eventually created to take the place of the education monster must maintain the most basic of free-market values – that is, that a student's behavior is a quality most desired when they eventually graduate and try to attain and maintain employment in their adult life.

There has to be an alternative.

Chapter 6

It's All About the Money Dummy

You can fool some of the people all of the time,
and all of the people some of the time,
but you cannot fool all of the people all of the time.
– Abraham Lincoln (attributed)

The goal of the education monster is disbursement, compensation, and keeping its student numbers as high as possible. Each school district has a truancy department, and its main function is not the welfare or education of our students, but rather, to make sure the students attend so the district's budget can be maintained. It is a numbers game, and unfortunately for the poor lonesome student, the system is rigged from the start.

Each student is allotted a dollar value for each day he or she attends school, and if the student is not at the institution, the school district does not receive payment. The machine that is the education monster is a trillion-dollar industry and anyone who even tries to stop this automaton will be trampled. There is no stopping the education monster; unfortunately, it will have to implode before any significant change will occur.

Again, the ideals of public education are noble, but when this nation harbors public schools that children do not want to go to, why do we become alarmed when children don't attend? They are telling us something, but we force them to go anyway.

Many children are threatened and harmed in this country's worst public schools. So why are we shocked to learn that truant numbers are so high, and that in spite of warnings and the threat to parents of jail time, numbers continue to rise?

Simply stated, it is much easier to enforce truancy laws than it is to reform the reason for children not wanting to attend a school that is dysfunctional.

As part of our research for writing this book, countless interviews were undertaken to help guide us. What was discovered was incredible and, in fact, shameful. One female student told us that if her parents did not demand that she go to school, she would not go. She determined her school to be a ruse, and that her teachers were, for the most part, only concerned with their paychecks and not about her physical or educational welfare. She said that if she had to study for an exam, she would call in sick, which allowed her to study at home in peace. Many of her classrooms were unruly and her teachers did not have control of the students. This student learned the tricks of public school truancy laws – she could be sick for two days without a doctor's note several times a month. If she timed it right, she could blame her female period once a month and she could get sick another time. For her, it became a common occurrence; something she felt was necessary to keep her grades high.

So, what is this young woman telling us? First and foremost, she is telling us that she can better learn at home where it is quiet and peaceful. She is telling us that many of her classrooms are unruly and that her teachers do not have full control of the children. Additionally, she is telling us that the school is not taking advantage of the time they have with their students, that it is playtime for the kids and babysitting time for the teachers – high-priced babysitters, we might add. And lastly, this young woman is telling us she knew that she could fake her way into staying at home. A major question that comes to mind is why would she be compelled to lie to stay at home, and why would she not want to go to school in the first place? This question is especially pressing because it is obvious to us that she is a motivated and good student.

Upon further inquiry, it was learned that she was homeschooled through her elementary and junior high school years, and upon entering public high school, she witnessed a failed system firsthand. This young lady was taught the skill of learning in a homeschool environment, and when placed in a public high school, she immediately realized she could learn more on her own than in a room filled with students and with a teacher who did not want to be there.

This frustration was evident through our many discussions with her and in part became the reason for this chapter. She, like many of her fellow students, knew they were not learning and that they were forced to endure the hardship of a school that did not care for their well being.

This, of course, is only part of the problem, and in and of itself cannot be fixed. It must be a part of the education monster's demise. Education, like life learning, must be fun and something done throughout a person's life. If a student is not taught to enjoy learning, the adult he or she becomes will also not enjoy the knowledge that awaits them. This is why we are demanding immediate destruction of a failed system.

We are demanding that mandatory education laws be reformed immediately. We believe that education should only be mandatory to age 16, and that optional courses of study, even trade schools, be considered until the student is age 18, but more on that a little later.

Our education system must adapt to changing times. How, in good consciousness, can we keep supporting an outdated design and force our children to waste years of learning time in a failed public school system?

There has to be an alternative.

Chapter 7

The Rising Cost of Education

A billion here and a billion there, and pretty soon you're talking real money.
– Everett Dirksen

So how much does the United States pay to educate each child? It may come as a surprise to many taxpayers that they are, as a whole, paying on average about $11,000 to $12,000 a year to educate a child from K-12 grade. How can this be?

According to a 2007 *Washington Post* article, our nation's capital in Washington, D.C., pays $12,979 to educate its children, and despite this incredible amount of money, Washington, D.C., continues to score as one of this nation's worst districts.

In 2005, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) stated that the United States tied for first place with Switzerland when it came to per student expenditure, with both countries spending about $11,000.

Conversely, the Goldwater Institute came out with a study in 2006 that said Arizona's public schools did a poor job of handling the public's money. In fact, this report claimed that Arizona's private schools did the same job for about half the cost. In short, if Arizona wanted to run its public schools like private schools, it would have to eliminate 21,000 administrative employees and hire 25,000 more teachers.

How can that be? Our nation has the highest cost per student, but we still continue to test as one of the world's worst amongst developed countries. Notwithstanding the high level of funding, U.S. public schools continue to lag behind the schools of other rich western countries in reading, math, and science.
According to former U.S. Secretary of Education William J. Bennett, between 1960 and 1995 United States public school spending has increased by about 212%, even though inflation has been adjusted to this figure. In 1994, less than half of all public school

employees taught, and out of the 21 industrial countries in the world, United States high school seniors ranked 19th in math, 16th in science and dead last in physics.

Bill Gates, one of the wealthiest men in the world and an innovator of technology, said that our American schools are "obsolete." There is little doubt that as consumers we would never tolerate such expenditures, unless we were forced to by a monopoly.

Could it be that there is another reason American companies are leaving the United States? Perhaps there is another indirect link to the availability of quality workers and their ability to be productive. We must remind our readers that the American consumer expects value and profit. If a quality widget cannot be made for a reasonable price, the picky American consumer will not buy. As such, why would an American company pay a high wage for an uneducated worker in the United States, when the same caliber worker can be paid substantially less in another country?

There is little doubt in our minds that an individual and a nation's productivity are related to its education level. As well, educational quality has an impact on labor market outcomes and per capita economic growth. In essence, especially in a globally competitive market, working smarter can increase productivity and a nation's standard of living, especially in the new industrial age of technology. Human capital is and will remain the outcome of an educated population. This is the reason why the United States has been spending an ever-increasing amount of money trying to turn around a failed system of public education. Otherwise, this country would not be able to compete with our economic rivals in the decades ahead.

Then again, education has become the new Ponzi scheme of the 21st century; and because it has become the goal of the education elite in the United States, states and the federal government are fueling these cost increases. Yet, even with these increases, our schools are getting worse.

There has to be an alternative.

Chapter 8

Budget Cut Blues

A reformer is a guy who rides through a sewer in a glass-bottomed boat.
– James Walker

Like most experiments, a request for additional money is most certainly asked for, as was the case with the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Asking for more and more money has been a tool of the education monster, and will continue if not curtailed. This is another good reason for the destruction of our current system.

It has been all too easy for the education monster to use the pockets of the trusting taxpayer, but in bad economic times, these same people often decide to say no. However, is there an alternative to rising educational costs? Yes, and we have a solution.

But before we get there, let's talk further about how school districts currently handle budget cuts. Case in point – DeKalb County Board of Education in Decatur, Georgia had to make some tough decisions, and some interesting ones as well, we might add.

DeKalb County learned that it had to live with $327 million less than in its previous year's budget. The new plan was still sizable, with some $6.73 billion allotted in 2008. Yet, what was striking, even with so much money, was that budget cuts included a cut of $525 per teacher in pay, $400 per student in classroom materials cost, $200 per

student in common purchases (what this means, we have no idea), $17.50 per student in textbook costs, and $350 per teacher for technology costs. The cuts continued with a cut of $200 per teacher in library costs, and in spite of increasing fuel costs, the budget still proposed a cut of $8.1 million. Can you believe it – fuel costs ranged from $336.7 million to $344.6 million? Wow!

Now this is one of the more interesting aspects of the district's budget, and, we believe, one of the major solutions to the destruction of the education monster. In spite of major cuts almost across the board, distance learning experienced a whopping 25% rise in funds, from $20.3 million to $25.3 million. How can this be? The answer is simple, because of the decline of public schools and its desire to maintain control of homeschooled children, which many parents are turning to, the DeKalb County Board of Education, in its infinite wisdom, found that it was advantageous to expand its programming to meet this emergent demand.

You see, the district actually makes a profit off homeschool students, whereas traditional classroom instruction costs continue to rise at an almost uncontrollable rate. Well, think about it – no or little transportation costs; no heating, air-conditioning or lighting costs; no building or grounds upkeep costs; no truancy problems, which require staff to follow up on; no school breakfasts or lunch programs to administer; and so forth and so on.

In fact, the DeKalb County Board of Education did approve a budget of $700,000 for roof replacements for seven of the schools within the district. Just think about it for a moment. How much could actually be saved by allowing and even encouraging distance instruction? The amount of money that can be saved is almost incalculable. No wonder the district approved an increase of 25% for distance learning programs over the previous year. It is simple; the school district gets the same amount of money to educate a child at home, which equates into a sizable profit.

It is obvious to us that the future of education is, in part, going to be distance learning. Some of it may or may not be online, but online should be considered and even expanded, for certainly a great many possibilities exist online that don't with traditional distance learning.

Online education distance learning allows school districts to recruit teachers outside a geographical area, and even allows smaller school districts to pool teachers and students together. Conversely, traditional distance learning uses prepared booklet materials and limits the contact with a teacher. In an online setting, contact can be almost instantaneous depending on how the class is initially set up. In most cases, however, students can get a response within 24 hours or less.

For those cases where a student does not have a computer or access to one, there are, of course, traditional booklet materials. Yet, if a district had enough foresight, they could use the savings from traditional brick and mortar education to buy these aspiring students a new computer every two to three years. If private donations can develop and raise enough money to buy $200 computers for poor kids around the world, why can't our own schools, which receive about $12,000 per pupil, spend a measly $200 to buy a student a computer.

Let's think about it for a moment. Our education system spends about $12,000 per student per year on average to educate an American child; whereas, a homeschool materials packet, for an entire year of instruction, costs less than $500. There are, of course, some administrative costs involved in arranging a homeschool program, but

certainly it cannot be anything near the difference of $11,500. Remember, the building costs, including gas, electricity, etc., listed previously are the savings to the district. For the sake of argument, and I think we are being generous, let's say it still costs $6,000 to educate a child at home. That is still a whopping 50% savings.

We know from previous chapters that private schools do a better job of money management, as well as educating our children. In fact, some reports have the savings at about half. With this said, it seems obvious that our current education system is bloated and is yet another reason to destroy the monster it has become.

If we want to improve our public schools, we need a comprehensive overhaul and everything should be on the table. With such thinking, money can actually be saved; although, the major goal is educating this nation's most valuable assets, not saving money – that is, unless the economy goes into a tail spin.

As a direct result of state mandatory testing, many children are forced to go to summer school to make up what they did not learn during the regular school year. This was the case with the state of Georgia in 2008, where many disappointing fifth and ninth grade students did not pass the state math requirements to advance into the next grade level. This do-over attitude is nothing new to the education monster, which always wants more and more money. Well, the state of Georgia is not pleased with the education monster and is considering the elimination of the summer school option in the future. This, we believe, will not work either. It's like the little Dutch boy who is holding the dike from breaking with just his finger; eventually, he will not be able to hold back the gushing waters. Not advancing children to the next grade is not a good idea either; basically, the taxpayer is forced to spend another $12,000 to educate a child for something the student should have already been taught. And the cycle goes on and on, and we keep spending more and more money for mediocrity; or as one wise young man once said, all we are doing is swirling the same old junk around, nothing changes.

In spite of a looming budget crisis that lay ahead for the United States, no real solutions are given by the education monster. California and its education budgetary problems are slowly being exposed; and Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger needs money fast and now. Needless to say, the education monster is not pleased with Arnold, who has his back against the wall.

Just think about it, the state of California has a $16 billion budget shortfall. This means saving money must come from somewhere and, yes, this includes cuts to the education monster. It does not matter to the education monster that the state's bonds are almost worthless, or that the state is in a crisis. Raise taxes – feed me, no matter the cost. This self-centered attitude is what got us into this budgetary problem in the first place.

Public educators are picketing and crying foul and are slowly cutting back on their duties, which is to serve the children of the state. No matter, cut our pay and see what happens is the attitude of the education elite in California.

Well, you have not seen anything yet, baby. When the real crisis happens, the education monster will not have a leg to stand on, and no one will care. It is just a matter of time. This little $16 billion crisis is nothing compared to what is going to happen in the future.
Deficit spending and reliance on bond expenditures has become a common practice in this country, particularly in California. Ross Perot, who became famous during his

presidential bids in 1992 and 1996, recently created a Web site, http://perotcharts.com/, which clearly illustrates this country's budgetary problems and the looming troubles ahead. We recommend every reader of this publication look at his Web site.

The United States spends more than almost any industrialized country in the world, and we still turn out widget workers rather than widget designers. We believe that the economic forces that lay ahead will unquestionably force the education monster to admit its failures and give into a market-driven educational system.

There has to be an alternative.

Chapter 9

California's Money Problems

The Great Depression, like most other periods of severe unemployment,
was produced by government mismanagement
rather than by any inherent instability of the private economy.
– Milton Friedman

It is a well-known fact that the biggest single cause of increase in public education is administrative costs, as opposed to the cost savings that private and online schools offer. Simply stated, private schools face market forces, whereas the education monster's control of public education has maintained a monopoly that harbors countless redundancies and has led to a grossly outweighed increase in comparable expenditures.

This country has always looked for a cost advantage; this is what the basis of capitalism is all about. However, within capitalism there faces the constant change of market forces, something public schools seldom comparably face. In fact, when it comes to budget cuts, for the most part, most public schools in this country seldom face the same economic consequences as the private sector. The long-held belief in supporting our children's education has held most critics of public education expenditures at bay. Well, maybe, just maybe, the time has come when this is no longer the case.

The *Financial Times* quoted Matthew Garrahan on July 25, 2008, as saying, "Arnold Schwarzenegger is threatening to slash the salaries of California state employees to the federal minimum wage to keep the state solvent amid a deepening cash crisis." How can this be? Would this include public educators, who have been mostly

immune? The simple answer is yes for some, but only if the stalemate is not overcome.

You see, the state of California faces a $16 billion budget deficit, an amount larger than most people can even imagine. The cuts would, of course, be temporary to more than 200,000 state employees and would save $400 million a month. This is an amazing amount of money, but it still comes about two-thirds short of the budget deficit. The $4.8 billion saved still leaves about $11 billion in cuts to go. Where in heaven is this money going to come from?

The governor is also considering laying off 20,000 temporary workers and terminating all contracts. Critics call this threat a scare tactic, and add that simply raising taxes would solve the problem.

Needless to say, this budget battle will continue for some time. We, of course, have a solution that should be added to any responsible discussion. We believe that California, like every state in the union, should dissolve the mandated, monopolized public education system and allow free market forces to realign public education, which does not currently function.

Right now, public education functions as a kingdom, with no competition to its rule. They are financed by tax revenues, most of which come from property taxes. Moreover, any discussion in cutting public education expenditures is usually considered last. Nevertheless, California is running out of money. It is losing its ability to finance its debt and it cannot live with current revenue streams. It will not take much to make the state insolvent; in fact, many people believe that one single crisis will demand the changes we propose doing now.

We are encouraged by Governor Schwarzenegger's bold move, but honestly think little will come of it. Nothing will come of this because a joint resolution between parties will give the appearance that everything is OK and that they have again solved the problem. Yet, the current budget crises will not be solved as long as the state of California has the ability to borrow, which it will do until it cannot anymore.

All we have to do is look at what the state has done over the past 20 years or so. It will use any gimmick possible to hide the growing problem. First, it was a state lottery, which was suppose to solve the lack of money for public education, followed by approval of Indian Reservation gambling profit-sharing agreements. Lastly, California has continued to borrow, which has allowed its debt to become a monster unto itself. You see, California does not want to address the problem; it wants to find newer economic streams or continue to borrow to keep the current system going – at all costs, we might add.

Yet, we believe that when the next economic crisis hits, California will be forced to change, something it will not voluntarily do now. We use California as an example, but this could just as easily happen anywhere in the United States, and soon. Consequently, we have laid out a broad litany of options for any state or public school district to solve their lack of money in some of the later chapters.

There has to be an alternative.

Chapter 10

Corruption in Education

Ninety percent of the politicians give the other ten percent a bad reputation.
– Henry A. Kissinger

Like any behemoth, the bigger an institution is, the easier it is to steal from it; and the more trust we place in the education monster, the more it steals from its naive believers.

Let's take the problems of the Bush Administration's Reading First program, which some believe was used to reward political followers and ideological cronies.

The Inspector General of the United States Department of Education released its findings on September 22, 2006, which proved that preferential treatment and conflicts of interest ran amuck in the program. Another one of the main arguments was that the program was not scientifically based, which was a requirement for funding.

The Inspector General discovered that pressure was used to approve materials from preselected publishers and that the program was not open to other publishers who wanted to get in on the lucrative deal. The $4.8 billion in grant money that was dished out to states and school districts since 2002 was, in reality, a ruse to divert money to those who supported and were connected with the Bush Administration.

Final determination of the Reading First program has not been determined; however, in June of 2008 a Senate Appropriations subcommittee and a House Appropriations subcommittee voted to get rid of all funding for this contentious program.

We say well done! Now all Congress has to do is get both the Senate and House to vote the elimination bill through and then we have one less intrusion into local educational concerns.

Yet, corruption is not limited to the federal government; in fact, the education monster is structured in such a way that corruption and mismanagement remains a pervasive problem that plagues many public schools.

In truth, calls in the state of New York for an office of Inspector General first started in 2005 because of the corruption scandal surrounding Pamela Gluckin, who was a public school chief financial officer. After a full investigation, it was discovered that 25 people, including Gluckin, within the Roslyn School District in Long Island, had embezzled $11.2 million.

Many people might wonder how this group of educators was caught; I know we did. The group would never have been caught from within with everyone taking from the pie – that is, until it got out of hand, which often happens in cases like these. In short, a suspicious Home Depot clerk found it odd that John McCormick, a school district employee, would be using a Roslyn school credit card to purchase building supplies for his part-time construction company. Overall, McCormick ran up charges in excess of $85,000 at several Long Island towns. An audit eventually revealed that McCormick's card was one of 74 school credit cards that were used by other school employees accused in the scheme.

The Roslyn embezzlement scandal has since become a rallying call for further investigations throughout the state of New York, as well as this nation.

New York, however, is not alone.

CNN reported December 23, 2003, that, "Former Washington Teachers Union President Barbara Bullock and three others have pleaded guilty to stealing $4.6 million in union funds. Four others have been indicted as well. Bullock admitted embezzling more than $2.5 million during the six years she headed the union."

Lisa Snell from *School Reform News* wrote on June 1, 2004, that,

> In Oakland, Michigan, Superintendent James Redmond was charged with felony embezzlement that included running a nonprofit organization, the Mind's Institute that benefited from large no-bid contracts with the district.

Several school board members in East Detroit are awaiting trial for their participation in a large school district embezzlement scheme as well.

In the Fort Worth School District, Superintendent Thomas Tocco was still running the district even after a contractor and school district administrator stole $10 million. Tocco learned about problems involving the district's contracting in 2000, after an internal audit showed management hadn't reviewed invoices to make sure they matched up with the work that was done. Tocco and the board president discussed the audit, but the rest of the trustees didn't learn about it for 16 months. In the interim, the contractor, Ray Brooks, won $2 million more in business from the district.

In Lancaster, Pennsylvania, Superintendent Ricardo Curry had resigned and was the subject of federal, state and local investigations into illegal hiring practices. He paid his unqualified girlfriend, sister and brother-in-law thousands of dollars in consulting fees for work they often did not even attempt to perform. For example, his girlfriend, Tamara DeShields, was paid $1,500 per day for consulting work in 2001 and 2002 for the Office of Teaching and Learning.

In 2003, the FBI completed an investigation into the Harrisburg School District that was launched when a teacher discovered 1,000 laptop computers purchased with federal grants had never been delivered. The federal government charged the district's former information technology director and the head of a Dauphin County computer firm with running a $1.9 million kickback scheme.

A 2004 report from the General Accounting Office confirmed that the e-rate program, which each year provides schools with $2.5 billion in subsidies for Internet services, has been fraught with fraud and abuse. Federal e-rate administrators and school districts around the nation have failed to monitor their e-rate contracts." A number of examples include:

Illinois

> The Chicago Public schools have more than $5 million in e-rate computer equipment sitting in a warehouse, even though e-rate regulations require the equipment be installed in the same year as the district receives the grant.
> California
>
> In San Francisco, school officials discovered a $68 million networking project by a private company would actually cost less than $18 million if done by district technicians.
> New York
>
> A New York company was charged with eight counts of federal crimes after the firm bought expensive equipment beyond what the schools could pay for, then created phony invoices for its own reimbursement.
> Texas
>
> An $18 million e-rate project in Ysleta was ended after federal auditors discovered the firm contracting with the Ysleta schools had precluded other Internet companies from the bidding process.

Since 1991, it has cost California taxpayers almost $220 million to bail out seven public school districts because of financial mismanagement and fraud:

- $60 million (pending); Vallejo Unified, 2004.
- $100 million; Oakland Unified, 2003.
- $2 million; West Fresno Elementary, 2003.
- $1.3 million; Emery Unified, Emeryville, 2001.
- $20 million; Compton Unified, Los Angeles County, 1993.
- $7.3 million; Coachella Valley Unified, Riverside County, 1992.
- $28.5 million; Richmond Unified (now West Contra Costa Unified), 1991.

Despite the assurance that public schools are held accountable for the proper use of taxpayer funds, school administrators who mismanage public funds actually suffer few consequences.

Chris Thompson reported in the *East Bay Express* (Oakland) in 2003:

> One of the most infuriating problems in public education is the absolute lack of public accountability for system administrators. Berkeley superintendent Jack McLaughlin spent his district $6 million into the hole, and where is he now? He serves as superintendent of education for the state of Nevada.

J. L. Handy bankrupted the Compton school district, and what happened to him? The Emeryville school board hired him and let him destroy their district as well.

Walter Marks forced the West Contra Costa district to beg Sacramento for a $29 million bailout, and soon thereafter, the Kansas City school district hired him as its new superintendent.

It was reported in the *New York Times* on June 25, 2008, that indictments in "April charged Asquith Reid, Mr. Stewart's former chief of staff, and Joycinth Anderson…with embezzling $145,000 from a nonprofit program that was supposed to tutor public school children."

Roger Phillips of the *Record* reported on June 19, 2008,

> The San Joaquin County grand jury - in a scathing six-page report released Wednesday – accused Stockton Unified School District leaders of misuse of public funds, an effort to cover up the misuse and hiring consultants to do work that should have been done by district employees.

Among the numerous findings of the grand jury (what follows is a condensed and amended version):

> A district plan to pay more than 15 assistant principals with restricted-use funds in the 2008-09 fiscal year represented a misuse of funds.
> The report also said the district spent restricted funds to pay eight visual and performing arts teachers who had beforehand been paid from a general fund.
>
> School Safety and Violence Prevention Act funds were used to pay about $90,000 in costs associated with an April 2007 clinic for sports coaches; 33 sports figures ran the one-day clinic and were paid at least $1,000. Five of them received $5,000, plus mileage. The athletic department also pressured a vendor into donating cash for its program.
>
> The report additionally said the district spent funds intended exclusively for English-language learners to buy an algebra program that was then also used by English-proficient students. About one-third of the $450,000 cost for the program was paid for with a grant for teacher training and that English-proficient students accounted for a little more than one-third of the fifth- through eighth graders who used the program at 12 K-8 schools.

John Larson of *Mountain Mail* reported on May 29, 2008, "An internal investigation and an audit found that three employees of the Alamo Navajo School Board embezzled more than $63,000 over a two-year period."

A two-year investigation led to 21 indictments against Patricia McGill, and a former Director of Literacy Programs in Franklin County, Florida, as well as 68-year-old Bonnie

Segree. If convicted, 60-year-old Patricia McGill faced life in prison and millions of dollars in fines.

In 2006, Colorado's Community Leadership Academy's Board member Katie Squair was arrested and later convicted of embezzlement. She was accused of stealing about $400,000, but entered a guilty plea to one count of embezzling less than $70,000.

Ronnie Gene DeShon, 51, of Gallatin, Missouri, pled guilty in March 2005 to fraud; he confessed to embezzling $854,699 from the Pattonsburg School District between 2000 and 2004.

In 2002, two former principals and two ex-bookkeepers at four South Carolina Fairfield County schools were indicted on charges of embezzling public funds. Extensive audits questioned expenditures on staff parties, wedding gifts and loans to employees, amid other inappropriate practices.

In 2002, Nettie Jane Ennis, a former Loudoun County public schools bookkeeper in Ashburn, Virginia, was charged with money laundering and embezzling money. The scheme was rather easy; she issued more than $205,000 in paychecks to former employees and deposited them in her bank account.

In 2007, Catherine Crosier, 45, of Augusta, Maine, was sentenced in U.S. district court to six months in prison for embezzling $45,503 from the Maine Education Association.

In 2004, three school officials from GateWay Academy were arrested in connection with a state Department of Justice investigation into misuse of public funds and embezzlement.

Peggy Lou VanHoose, 57, of Tutor Key, Kentucky, a former finance director for the Johnson County school system, was charged with giving herself unauthorized pay raises, issuing paychecks to her son while he was in jail, and using a school district credit card to purchase DVDs and mascara.

East San Jose school district accountant Jane Ramirez was accused of embezzlement and poor oversight in 2001. One estimate had the school district's losses at up to $1 million over a 10-year period of time.

Deborah Calhoun Mitchell, a former employee of the Regional Education Service Agency pleaded guilty to two counts of embezzlement and filing a false tax return in 2006; she took more than $1.3 million.

James Redmond, the former superintendent of the Oakland County Intermediate School District was charged with one count of embezzlement by a public official and misconduct in office, both are felonies in the state of Michigan.

In 1992, Anthony J. Katter Jr., 49, business manager for the Ashburnham-Westminster Regional School District in Massachusetts, stood accused of stealing $1.1 million.

In 2007, Memorial High School Senior Campus Principal Michael Maples was sued by his former employer, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, school district, for embezzling almost $32,000 while he was an employee there in 2006.

In 2000, former West Virginia state schools superintendent Hank Marockie resigned his position, while FBI investigators examined his use of public and private money.

In 2002, former Estes Park school superintendent Richard Kastendieck, 52, was indicted on three counts of theft, one count of felony embezzlement of public property, one count of felony forgery and a misdemeanor count of first-degree official misconduct in connection with $60,000 in embezzlement of funds.

In 2006, the principal and former secretary of the Lewisboro-Katonah School District in Westchester County, New York, pleaded guilty to falsifying receipts in excess of $3,000 and $6,000, respectively, for expenses they didn't incur. The defendants paid a $750 fine and were conditionally discharged.

Yet, instead of dismantling the education monster, legislators continue to try to fix a failed system, as the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* reported on June 27, 2008,

> Assemblyman Alec Brook-Krasny (D-Coney Island-Dyker Heights) announced that he recently supported legislation that passed the Assembly to combat fraud by school administrators (A.11513-A). The measure will revoke the professional license of any school administrator or supervisor convicted of defrauding the government in excess of $1,000 and remove that person from his or her job.
>
> 'We took this step to help prevent embezzlement by school administrators,' said Brook-Krasny. 'When a school district leader abuses his or her power to that degree, that person should no longer serve our children or our community. This is a tough bill that will send corrupt school administrators a message: Not in this state.'

Once again, we are calling for an end to all attempts to fix a failed system. It is broken, and everyone knows it, but is unwilling to call for its ending. These little attempts to patch a system that cannot function are just attempts to save the education monster from annihilation, and everyone knows it. The monopoly of public education has led us down this road, a road that can no longer be repaired, but instead must be replaced.

There has to be an alternative.

Chapter 11

NEA Control of the Education Monster

The NEA will become a political power second to no other special interest group…NEA will have more and more to say about how a teacher is educated, whether he should be admitted to the profession, and depending on his behavior and ability whether he should stay in the profession. – Sam Lambert, NEA Executive Secretary

In essence, the National Education Association (NEA) is the controlling force behind everything that happens in our public schools today. We say this with confidence because it is the largest education lobby in the United States and it wields the most influence when it comes to state and national politics.

In order to be a public school teacher in almost every school district in the United States, you must become a member of this powerful organization and yield to its authority. And as many people have unfortunately learned, to go up against the NEA is a death sentence to your teaching and even political career. Basically, follow their wishes and you will be left alone, attack them and their power will be thrust upon you like an inferno.
In reality, a teacher's views are held in check because they need to be licensed, which is controlled by this powerful organization.

The NEA is a political machine, and it promotes a social agenda, which is not the welfare of children. In fact, it promotes an ideology that is contrary to the ideals of basic educational skills. We believe that the most powerful teachers' organization in this country should be about the welfare of our students, not its own self-interest or its social agenda. As such, we believe this organization must also be cut down to size, because as long as it remains the primary instrument for education control, nothing significant is going to change.

So, what do we have to fear, you might ask? Well let's see, according to Nancy Salvato of the *New Media Journal* (2006),

> The NEA controls the education and hiring practices of teachers through the agency known as the National Council for Accreditation of Teachers Education.
>
> Gloria Steinem was stated in the *Saturday Review of Education* that by the year 2000 they hoped to teach children to believe in their potential, not God.
>
> NEA's executive director Terry Herndon stated that his goal was to 'tap the legal, political and economic powers of the U.S. Congress…to re-order the priorities of the United States of America.'
>
> As a pledge to the NEA, President Jimmy Carter established the United States Department of Education.
>
> As a result of the NEA's control over the declining quality of education and values within our public schools, conservative advocates started asking that free market forces be applied to our educational system.

Dennis Cuddy, the author of *The Grab for Power*, (2000) laid out the history of the NEA's quest for power (what follows is a condensed and amended version):

> The National Education Association (NEA) was initially founded in 1857.
>
> The NEA started its first social agenda, sex education and sex hygiene in 1912.
>
> The Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education was organized in 1913 and by 1918, it produced its seven cardinal principles for educating a child.
>
> The Cleveland Group, or Educational Trust, first met in 1915. They are George Strayer, NEA president in 1918-1919; Elwood Cubberly from Stanford University; and Charles Judd, close friend of John Dewey. Their objective was to restructure learning materials, and place loyal subordinates in seats of educational authority, thus controlling the educational process in the United States.
>
> The father of progressive education, John Dewey, was made honorary president of the NEA in 1932.
>
> At the 72nd annual NEA meeting in 1934, a report entitled Education for the New America alleged that the major function of public schools is to familiarize students to a new social order.
>
> The *New York Herald Tribune* reported on June 29, 1938, that NEA member Dr. Goodwin Watson called for teachers to overthrow "conservative reactionaries."
>
> In 1940, the NEA started promoting the Building America social studies texts, which were contrary to American values.

By 1961, the NEA's Commission on Professional Rights and Responsibilities started gathering information on groups who criticized NEA activities.

On April 26, 1962, the *Tulsa Tribune* said,

> What is the function of the National Education Association — to improve the education of America's children or to stifle criticism of present educational methods?

In October of 1962, the *Chicago Sun-Times* also said,

> …Real control over the nation's children is being shifted rapidly to the NEA. That organization has about completed the job of cartelizing public school education under its own cartel. It is doing so under an organization known as the National Council for Accreditation of Teachers Education, an agency whose governing council is tightly NEA controlled ...The manner in which the NEA is usurping parental prerogatives by determining the type of education offered ...is ...very simple: control the education and hiring of teachers.

On October 20, 1962, the *New York Times* said that Dr. Sterling McMurrin resigned as U.S. Commissioner of Education due to his anxiety over NEA control over American education.

In October 1967, the *NEA Journal* published Helping Children to Clarify Values that said,

> The old approach seems to be to persuade the child to adopt the 'right' values...The teacher must work to eliminate his own tendencies to moralize.

In November 1967, the *NEA Journal* published The New Social Studies, which said,

> Probably the most obvious change occurring in the social studies curriculum is a breaking away from the traditional dominance of history, geography, and civics.
> In addition, in 1967, NEA executive secretary Sam Lambert said,

> NEA will become a political power second to no other special interest group ...NEA will have more and more to say about how a teacher is educated, whether he should be admitted to the profession, and depending on his behavior and ability whether he should stay in the profession.

Elizabeth Koontz became head of the National Education Association in 1968 and promoted the idea that teachers must "organize, agitate, and strike."

In January 1969, *Today's Education*, which was published by the NEA, said "...Educators will assume a formal responsibility for children when they reach the age of two."
On July 3, 1970, NEA president George Fischer said,

> A model Professional Practices Act has been developed, and work has begun to secure passage of the Act in each state where such legislation is needed. With these new laws, we will finally realize our 113-year-old dream of controlling who enters, who stays in, and who leaves the profession.

In September 1970, NEA's *Today's Education* editorial said that teachers were change agents …and this system is necessary to change our society.

Saul Alinsky's *Rules for Radicals* was published in 1971 and became the NEA's bible. John Lloyd said, "...An organizer must stir up dissatisfaction and discontent."

In 1971, Schools for the '70s and Beyond: A Call to Action was published by the NEA, which affirmed, "...teachers who conform to the traditional institutional mode are out of place."

In 1972, NEA president Catherine Barrett stated,

> We are the biggest potential political fighting force in this country and we are determined to control the direction of American education.

On February 10, 1973, Gloria Steinem declared in the NEA's *Saturday Review of Education* that "By the year 2000 we will, I hope, raise our children to believe in human potential, not God."

In 1974, NEA president Helen Wise said,

> We must reorder Congressional priorities by reordering Congress. We must defeat those who oppose our goals.

In 1975 *Today's Education*, NEA president John Ryor, stated, "We must become the foremost political power in the nation."

In 1976, Terrel H. Bell was an affiliate of the NEA's Cardinal Principles Preplanning Committee and was named by President Reagan to be the U.S. Secretary of Education.

On December 6, 1979, the U.S. Department of Education was established, despite widespread opposition.

Cuddy's thesis goes on and one, so we will stop here, only because we think you get the point. A major portion, although not all, of Cuddy's argument was used in this chapter because he, we believe, gives one of the best arguments about the NEA's quest for political power and its social agenda. We do, however, take issue with portions of his thesis. The ideals of God, like that of homosexuality, are personal issues, and should be dealt with by families and their personal wishes. Unlike the NEA and Cuddy, we do not have a social agenda, per say. We believe these issues, like many others, should be part of a family's decision, not governments or organizations that have social agendas.

Yet, on the flipside we agree with Cuddy, that education should not include a national social agenda. With centralization comes a national social agenda, which is the aim of

the NEA. We believe that local control of education should be adhered to, thereby protecting us from any national agenda, which so often comes like a firestorm. Simply stated, education is about the opportunity to explore the wonders of the world, without a political scheme attached to it.

We do not side with either political party's ideals for educating America's children. We do, however, believe in empowering parents to take control of their children's education. We are also in favor of de-monopolizing the way children are educated. Instead of educating children from a single mold, we think education should be individualized from that of a central model.

Yes, our states and national government have a right to know that children are being educated, but this does not give them the right to mandate a social doctrine contrary to parental rights, which is what the NEA has been advocating for a very long time.

With the destruction of the education monster and its singular view of education, the NEA will also lose its power base; and, as such, it will become an insignificant factor in educating America's children in the future. That is, unless America's citizenry gives up this valuable right of self-determination.

There has to be an alternative.

Chapter 12

AFT Partners with the NEA

When referring to the NEA, education secretary Rod Paige called them a "terrorist organization." – CNN.com

The American Federation of Teachers, or ATF, is the second largest teachers union in the United States, and in recent years has become a prime target of the National Education Association or NEA. The ATF did want to merge with the NEA in 1998, but the NEA refused the request at the time. However, after the No Child Left Behind Act and in recent years, a friendlier cooperative mood has taken place between these two dominant organizations.

The AFT was founded in 1916, and is affiliated with the AFL-CIO, which is one of this nation's most powerful trade unions. It not only represents and organizes teachers, it also handles local, state, and federal employees, university professors, and professionals, school-related personnel like bus drivers and cafeteria workers, and health care professionals.

Unlike the NEA, which has 3.2 million members, the AFT only has 1.4 million members, making it the second most powerful teachers union in the United States.

Whereas the NEA's membership is spread throughout the United States, the AFT is generally located on the East Coast. Moreover, unlike the NEA, the AFT organizes teachers outside the public school arena, including university professors and administrators, which is why the NEA has taken a keen interest in working with the AFT.

Though, in 2006, the two most powerful teachers unions in the United States formed the NEA AFT Partnership, which committed both organizations to work together on common goals. We wonder, what could these common goals be? Perhaps total control of what is taught in K-12th grades as well as university instruction?
So, what do we have to fear, some might ask? Well, just like the NEA, the AFT is not afraid to use its muscle to influence local school district elections, administrative

appointments, and especially political causes. This might not be so bad, if the organization trying to influence events served a worthy cause, but we know better. Here are some interesting facts,

> In 2004, only a day after education secretary Rod Paige called the NEA a "terrorist organization," the AFT and the NEA closed ranks and called for his expulsion.
>
> In 2000, the AFT proposed adding a fifth year, or 13th grade, to America's high schools.
>
> On July 4, 2000, Jodi Wilgoren from the *New York Times*, said, "Leaders of the two national teachers unions today harshly criticized the movement to raise academic standards in public schools."
>
> However, the same year, AFT called for tougher standards for teachers (Notation: it seems hypocritical to us to ask for higher teacher standards, but not for higher student standards, doesn't it).
>
> In 1999, the New York State Psychological Association agreed to join the AFT; this was the first such merger in the United States.
>
> In 1996, the AFT and the NEA gave their support to publicly financed (public) charter schools – as long as they stayed under the control of the teachers unions and benefited their members.
>
> In 1993, after Michigan's state legislator and governor signed a bill that eliminated property taxes be used for the state's public schools, an affiliate of the AFT sued the state of Michigan.
>
> In 1992, Albert Shanker, head of the AFT, called for a national curriculum, a national achievement test, standardized teacher training, and putting students of the same achievement level in classes together.
>
> In 1985, the AFT remained opposed to testing experienced teachers, only wanting to test incoming teachers.
>
> In 1985, Albert Shanker, the head of the AFT, lied about a pension fund deal that never existed.
>
> AFT was behind St Louis's biggest teachers' strike in 1983.

We seriously doubt the value of any merger between two organizations that have both had such a tainted history. The ideals of union membership have certainly shaped this country, but once we look closely at the ideology of teacher unions, we come to a different conclusion. When we think of unions, we think of unsafe working conditions, a lack of quality pay, etc; however, we now have a social agenda movement, which has nothing to do with working conditions or pay.

Also, unlike most manufacturing unions, most teacher unions are exempt from labor management reporting and disclosure laws, under which unions must make their finances public. Without direct oversight, these teacher unions continue to run their treasuries like a drunken sailor. In 2002, a D.C. teachers union (mentioned previously) embezzled $5 million, a Miami teachers' union stole $2.5 million, a Massachusetts

state teachers union took $800,000, and a Michigan teachers union wrote $218,000 in bad checks – and these are only the ones reported! We wonder how bad this problem really is. These unscrupulous unions are only at the top of the food chain, and have had a free hand to date. They spend membership dues on many non-related issues, which certainly brings their purpose into question.

There is little doubt in our minds that a lack of oversight and accountability continues to run amuck and will as long as these unions exist. The AFT and its sister, the NEA, are giants and with their eventual merger comes one of the most powerful threats to America's children since the polio panic. Their cooperation will lead to a singular path for this country's children, from kindergarten to graduate school. If their consolidation and conquest of America's education continues, there will be no alternative for the masses in the future. We believe that this is just what the education monster desires.

There has to be an alternative.

Chapter 13

No Child Left Behind

If no child gets ahead, then no child will be left behind. – Unknown Source

It was reported in 2008 that the Manhattan Beach Unified School District had a No Child Left Behind predicament. In short, district officials reported that they had been unable to meet testing standards three years in a row, despite the fact these same test results ranked the district as being in the top five in the state of California.

How could this be? Do you mean to tell us that the wisdom and foresight of the education elite in Washington, D.C., could not foresee such a difficulty?

The problem stems from how the federal government counts disabled students. The craziness of many of the archaic rules in the No Child Left Behind 2001 Act really puts local school districts in a bind. The Act incrementally increases the demands of standardized tests each year, with a 100% student compliance mandated by 2014. For the 2007-08 school year, the Manhattan Beach school district was required to achieve a 95% participation rate. The law also mandates that if one school within the district failed, the entire district fails, which was the case with Manhattan Beach Middle School.

Because of Manhattan Beach Middle School's three straight years of failing, the average yearly progress of the No Child Left Behind Act could result in the district being tagged a "performance improvement" district. This means, in a worst-case

scenario, the state or federal government could take over the school and the district's administration.

The catch-22 for Manhattan Beach School District is how the federal government counts some disabilities, which raises several problems. Those students who are on state-mandated independent education plans (IEPs) are legally allowed to have reasonable accommodations while taking the test; however, if such accommodations are taken, the student is put down as a no show.

In Manhattan Beach's case, 10.4% of the students fall under this category. In response to this problem, Manhattan Beach Middle School will redo its test for IEP students. How this test will be conducted and what changes will be made was, however, never mentioned. Which begs the question, who is playing with the numbers now?

Although, under district rules, all a parent has to do is ask that their child get special help during the test. Interestingly, the district is complaining about federal regulations, but at the same time has a provision to increase its disabled numbers. Sounds fishy to us.

This lead story gives rise to the question, should Washington, D.C., be regulating local education? Of course not, nor should state governments be doing so. We know from experience that governments generally do a poor job, especially when compared to free market forces.

As such, we are calling for the destruction of the No Child Left Behind Act, which was nothing more than a tool of the government goon to reform the education monster. Like any good ally, the government goon tried to aid its weakening partner, which did nothing but buy the education monster more time.

The ambiguous No Child Left Behind Act requires grades four through eight to achieve grade levels in math and reading by 2014. This noble goal is, nonetheless, ridiculously out of touch. In essence, we believe that no school district on the face of this earth could do this; that is, unless special provisions are made, like absurdly low standards for disabled students.

No Child Left Behind also states that each child climbs the ladder of knowledge each subsequent year. This goal is, however, out of step with reality. Research repeatedly states that children learn at different levels and continue to grow at different rates. This one size fits all, like public education in general, is doomed to fail.

There is no doubt that Republican leaders went along with this plan for one purpose and one alone – to destroy America's faith in our public education establishment. The No Child Left Behind Act was a Trojan horse that the public school establishment allowed in to buy it further time. However, like Troy of old, opposing forces are waiting for the right opportunity to storm the gates and defeat the education monster.

University of Michigan professor Susan Neuman, who once served in Bush's Education Department, stated publicly that she knew there were forces within the Bush administration that wanted to use No Child Left Behind to shame the public school model, thereby setting it up for failure and its eventual replacement. Even the mighty teachers' unions, which once supported the law, are now calling for the demise of the No Child Left Behind Act – only perhaps because they now feel picked on, we might add.

In laymen's terms, the No Child Left Behind Act mandated that statewide tests be required to make sure students were learning basic skills and to measure how well public schools were teaching; that tougher standards be implemented, which would elevate teachers to the highly qualified status in the subject taught; and that a Reading First program turn kids into good readers by the third grade.

In exchange for these, amongst other, mandates, local schools gained more freedom to use federal education money; and if a school did not measure up to statewide methods and deliver measured improvements, implementation of tutors and after school programs would be required. Otherwise, districts would be forced to transfer their students to better performing schools.

Like any opening reform, time was given to gage the success of the program, which is an award-winning tool of the education monster and its allies to buy more time. However, within a few short years of the reform, critics from both political parties were calling for its demise. Although, even today, only the most ardent conservatives are calling for the demise of the No Child Left Behind Act and the public school system, through the use of vouchers.

It would appear that the education monster was able to survive once again, this time by deflecting the public school systems error on politicians in Washington, D.C., which many American's already distrust. Smartly done, we might add. By blaming the reform on Washington, D.C., the public school system now has an effective argument to its long-lasting failures. You see, they now argue, education is the responsibility of the intervening government goon, not the fault of the education monster. This shortsighted argument will work for a while, like it has in the past; yet, with each fleeting year and decade, conditions worsen. And interestingly, the education monster has turned on its most powerful ally, the government goon, which will eventually demand many of the reforms we mention within this publication.

The biggest complaint amongst advocates against the No Child Left Behind Act is that teachers are no longer teaching reasoning skills, but instead teach for a test. Public schools are under the gun, with programs like art and music being cut in order to free up money for test preparation. In all reality, however, studies prove that students that participate in these types of activities perform better in the classroom and actually develop high analytical skills as a result.

With the weight and power of federal authority, public schools are now caught in a difficult situation. The government goon uses a carrot and stick approach to handle the problem, which is only making the situation worse. Bonuses are given to those schools that meet or exceed federal guidelines, and for those schools that do not meet the guidelines, money is increased for mandated intervention programs, and the threat of takeover is always present. No wonder teachers are teaching for the test and not teaching for life. And unfortunately, many teachers have been caught giving answers to the students during their examination, thereby guaranteeing student improvement and the teachers' continued employment.

Yet, while the education monster continues to struggle to improve student test scores for the government goon, charter schools are thriving, especially in many of our worst and most underprivileged areas in 2008. For example, there's Chicago's Alain Locke Charter Academy, which posted the city's highest elementary school increase and has seen four straight years of improvement. Or there's Houston's Amigos Por Vida Public Charter School, which increased it scores and percentages of students passing the state's math exam from 50% to a whopping 99%. And New York City's Carl C. Icahn

Charter School outperformed all other schools in the district by 40%. How is this possible, one might ask? Simple, when academic freedom is unleashed, and parents and children are given options and a stake in the future, average children gain the needed skills to perform incredibly.

Despite the proven success of alternative forms of education, the education monster will not let go of its monopoly and will fight any threat to its existence. As was the case in June 2008, when the Florida Education Association joined forces with the state associations for school boards, administrators, and superintendants in challenging Amendments 7 and 9, which would effectively alter the balance of power in the state of Florida in favor of parental educational choice.

Essentially, proponents of the status quo do not want to give the voters of Florida the chance to vote for or against parental educational choice. So what does the education monster do? It tries to align itself with the court tyrant to stop the vote from happening. We will see if the court tyrant will side for or against the people of Florida, who are effectively losing faith in public education; but for the time, the education monster will use whatever means at its disposal to effectively stop its eroding support and inevitable death.

The public is slowly catching on to the games of the education monster, and given enough time and enough rope, it will slowly hang itself, especially when enough people demand change.

There has to be an alternative.

Chapter 14

Stop the Construction

A pioneer destroys things and calls it civilization. – Charles Marion Russell

Our economy is constantly changing; yet, because of a deep tradition for public school support, the building of new schools continues almost unabated. This loyalty is admirable, but it negates the fact that there are available alternatives. However, feeding the education monster's appetite for newer and bigger schools remains the goal of the education elite in this country, a quest we call ignorant, at least, and criminal, at most.

More and more schools are aging and many school districts are faced with the daunting problem of either refurbishing the old buildings or constructing new ones; and even some districts must build new schools because of population growth. We understand this problem, but question the value of throwing more and more money at the same old problem.

Philadelphia's Lower Merion School District had a problem, one which many districts face around this country. In a hearing, local taxpayers became enraged when district officials requested a budget of $102 million for two new high schools; this amounts to $82,000 for each of the more than 1,240 estimated students. It should also be mentioned that relocating district offices might add an additional $30 million to the current budget. As bad as these numbers were, they pale when compared to the projection of $110 million, or $87,000 per student, if the school board delayed a decision. You see, rising construction costs are destroying budgets even before the ink becomes dry.

Here is the problem facing the state of Pennsylvania:

- 6% of public schools were built between 1900 and 1920.
- 32% of public schools were built between 1941 and 1960.
- 44% of public schools were constructed between 1961 and 1980.
- Many older buildings do not meet current safety and handicapped codes.
- Aging facilities cannot support modern technology.
- With older schools, recruitment and retention of teachers is harder, especially science teachers.

Souderton School District officials in Pennsylvania are also experiencing a population explosion, which has resulted in some interesting adjustments. High school enrollment has swelled to more than 2000 students, which forced district officials to move ninth grade students out of the high school into a temporary eighth and ninth grade school. We commend the district for their creative solution, but we take issue with their idea of creating a new high school just for the purpose of creating a smoother student transition. You see, a new high school would allow the district to bring up sixth graders and seventh graders into the middle schools and allow ninth graders into a newer and bigger high school. It seems like a lot of money for a convenience. At this stage, the idea is only a request – a request we think should never be approved. We really think the district should look to alternative educational ideas to help with their problem, but more on this a little later.

Rising fuel costs are also putting an economic strain on local school districts; not only fuel to run school buses, but also electricity costs are driving a greener attitude toward energy savings. Again, we praise the idea of using greener technology, but we ask why does this need to be included as a reason for new school construction?

Let's take Mercer County, Illinois, for example. Local officials decided five years ago to seek help with its rising electricity costs, and with the help of state and federal officials, the county now has its own wind-powered turbine, which powers the entire school district, the county nursing home, jail and hospital. In fact, estimates have the cost savings at more than $350,000 a year.

How about solar, one might ask? California's Milpitas Unified School District recently completed the installation of solar panels at each of its 14 district schools. De Anza and Foothill colleges have also installed moving solar panels that track the sun. And Fremont Union School District recently installed solar panels on its high school roofs, a move that will save the district $1.2 million a year. As such, we see no reason to even include the idea of going green in the same breath as new school construction. This is nothing more than a ploy by the education monster to try to sway the public in favor of building newer schools.

As well, a new school was recently approved in Dublin, Pennsylvania, which resulted in an average household cost of $600 a year for the term of the $119 million bond. We believe it is unfair to burden local taxpayers with the cost of constructing new schools simply because the education monster says it must be. The Pennsylvania School Boards Association forecasts that public school construction and renovation will decrease 33% from the previous trend over the past five years, much of which is due to rising construction costs and overruns.

The American public is slowly getting fed up with the education monster's tactics, and in many cases, will no longer continue to vote for a failed system. In 2003, Neshaminy School District in Pennsylvania planned a bond issue of $100 million in order to

build a new high school to replace its current school that was built in the 1950s. Local voters soundly defeated the absurd request. In this case, the public demanded the older historic school be renovated at a much lower cost. Students were put in modular's and portions of the school were renovated and completed by 2009.

Nevertheless, it seems the private sector has an even better solution to the education monster's need for money and not inconveniencing teachers and students. We call this the obvious common sense approach. While the Haverford School was being renovated, it held classes a few blocks away at the St. Thomas-Good Counsel School and used shuttles to transport the students back and forth. Yes, a little inconvenient, but practical to save money. School officials thought it was a better financial option than using mobile trailers, and used the experience as a lesson to the children about overcoming obstacles – they made it an adventure.

We utilized the various Pennsylvania examples to illustrate a common problem facing this country's desire to feed the education monster's longing for more and more money. We also believe that there are alternative solutions to spending more money, much like the private Haverford School approach.

Our current education ideals are rather new, perhaps – a little over 100 years old. We were once a country of pioneers where students were either homeschooled or sent to a church or village-sponsored school, many times in a one-room classroom. What we need now is a new pioneering spirit, like our forefathers once demanded of us.

We say NO to new construction costs, we say no to the status quo, and we say no to a continuance of all we need is more money to solve the public school crises. Money is not what ails the public school system in the United States. Instead, we believe the system is flawed and must be destroyed from the bottom up. Parents and local school districts must be allowed the freedom to create local solutions using modern technology and out-of-the-box thinking methods.

For some parents and states, it might make sense to use a voucher; for others, online methods will be employed; and for even others, a co-op or blending method will be used. But none of these methods will be employed until parents are given the right to determine where and how their child will be taught.

We, unlike the education monster, do not believe that a one-size-fits-all approach must be employed to give students a quality education. Instead, we say let education freedom rain, and let it be unleashed from the monopolistic system that now exists.

There has to be an alternative.

Chapter 15

Promoting Failure

I don't know the key to success, but the key to failure is trying to please everybody.
– Bill Cosby

The education monster promotes a mechanism for social promotion without cause and effect, which, if not destroyed, will continue to erode the value of education.

In many informal and privately held surveys, teachers overwhelmingly said they understand the doctrine of social promotion, and if a student is not passed along, blame is often placed on them for teaching improperly. With a teacher's job on the line, they reluctantly pass students from grade to grade, hoping and praying in many cases that the fault of the child's lack of knowledge will not come back to haunt them. The end result is a successive pattern of failure. This hidden social engineering policy has resulted in the decline of one of this world's greatest educational systems, which was a model for the developing world.
How can this be possible? One in three students flunked coursework in Tucson, Arizona, in 2006-2007, yet the city's school district advanced 90% of them anyway; and nine out of 10 students were moved to the next grade level despite failing basic English, math, science and even social science classes. In truth, during the previous six years, more than 94,000 students failed many of these essential classes. Needless to say, Tucson Public School students are the byproduct of the education monster's social promotion agenda to keep the system going at all costs, no matter what.

The education monster's policy of social promotion extends well beyond the public schools in Tucson. In fact, Pima Community College records showed that more than 79% of the students who entered had failed the math portion of the institution's assessment exam. This failure meant more than 4,200 student's required remedial math.

It is all too easy to blame teachers and administrators for the failure of these students; however, are there perhaps other reasons for the students' failure? Could it be that in a quest to feed the education monster with more and more students, we find that the system is flawed. There is little doubt in our minds that the education monster's arrogance has begun to show a critical weakness.

The state of Utah has had enough and is now asking for accountability from its state board of education; in short, the state's lawmakers now want a student's failure to equal the loss of his or her diploma. We believe, as do a great many Americans, that this standard does not seem to be unreasonable; but the education monster says the loss of a diploma will hinder a child's prospects of going to college and getting financial aid. Perhaps it is just us levelheaded educators, but isn't this the way education was and is supposed to be?

Lawmakers in Utah and countless other states in this country are now waking up to the reality that many public high school diplomas are not worth the paper they are written on. Lawmakers in Utah are basically saying if a student cannot pass the state's basic exit exam, no diploma should be issued, thereby guaranteeing the credibility of the state's educational system.

By the way, it should also be mentioned that the requirement for a high school diploma is the equivalent of an eighth grade education in most states. Interesting, isn't it? Our public schools give a diploma for completing a 12th grade education, but only require that each student pass a test that demonstrates an eighth grade education. Wow, does this not seem to counter common sense?

Nevertheless, maybe, just maybe, Utah will learn what California learned in 2002, when 52% of the state's public school students could not pass the exit exam the first time they took it. With this sobering statistic, the education monster immediately went to work and created a subcategory for learning disabled students. The state of California currently considers the test-phobic student to be viably disabled and gives help and in many cases a waiver to the exit exam; although, due to public outcries, this provision might not be able to maintain its special status much longer.

Yet, the education monster has another special provision up its sleeve for California; educators are now considering what is called a "differential diploma," which is a nice way of saying the student passed the coursework, but could not pass the exit exam. We are continually amazed by the lengths the education monster will go to maintain its existence and control of a failed system; however, time is running out, and the masses are starting to figure the system is rigged against them.

It seems to us that this two-tiered system is doomed from the start. There is one thing the American people don't want, that is to continue to ask students to sit in a classroom for four years of high school, be passed along through grade inflation, only to receive a second-rate degree. This approach will only forestall the inevitable destruction of the education monster, and do nothing to radically change a failed system.

We must be reminded and be prepared for further deceptions from the education monster; for surely, it will stop at nothing to deceive the American public.

There has to be an alternative.

Chapter 16

California's Great Dropout Debate

Each annual wave of dropouts costs the state $46.4 billion over their lifetimes because people without a high school diploma are the most likely to be unemployed, turn to crime, need state-funded medical care, get welfare and pay no taxes.
– Nanette Asimov
San Francisco Chronicle
February 28, 2008

It is common knowledge that California's Department of Education (CDE) will stoop to any depth to deceive the citizens of the state – like when it claimed California only had a 3.2% dropout rate in 1998 – a figure everyone knew was a lie. Yet, in 1999, California Parents for Educational Choice uncovered the big lie, when it countered that the dropout rate was actually closer to 30%. How can this be, one might ask? Simple, we respond, it is all part of the education monster's agenda to deceive this country's citizenry.

Until 2004, the California Department of Education continued its annual April dropout reports. But after Jack O'Connell, Superintendent of Public Instruction, became the organization's head, such dropout reports stopped until after the summer numbers came in, thereby decreasing the state's dropout rate.

In 2007, this practice continued almost unnoticed, until California Parents for Educational Choice criticized the CDE for its failure to issue its dropout report on time. The dropout report was finally issued on June 6, but only after pressure was applied and a public outcry was demonstrated.

Because of this early report, which did not include summer graduates, California's dropout rate took a huge hit – primarily because many students were unable to pass the eighth grade level high school exit exam.

The 2006 report listed data showing a dropout rate that jumped from an amazing 29% in 2005 to an even more incredible decline of 33%. California's citizenry were outraged by this worsening news, which was now being referred to as a crisis.

With the facts revealed, it became obvious to almost every critic of the CDE that they had been covering up an ever-worsening disaster; that is why they had delayed and been delaying the dropout numbers for several years.

So, why should this matter, one might ask? Well, let's take a look at some numbers. According to Alan Bonsteel of the *San Bernardino Sun* newspaper, on June 15, 2008, the following information was reported:

> If California would lower its dropout rate from 33% to 22%, the state would have 500 less murders each year.
>
> Because of so many lies spewing from public school districts across the country, the Department of Education announced a new standard for calculating dropout rates. (Authors notation: We are critical of such schemes, even before they are implemented. We need to watch this closely.)
>
> Using the Department of Education's definition, San Bernardino City Unified School District's dropout rate should reflect a shocking 64%, which is much higher than the state's average of 33%. This is based on the district's 2003 freshman enrollment of 6,099 ninth graders and the 2,173 graduates in 2007. This does, however, not include eighth grade dropouts, which could make these numbers even worse.

So, what does the CDE have to say about all the inaccuracies with the state's dropout rate? Again, there is always a seemingly plausible answer. They say they need a new, more expensive computer system to track the students individually. With this, the CDE would have to increase its budget and hire new staff to manage the numbers coming from the state's 1,000 plus school districts and 58 county offices of education.

We believe that the only thing a new computer system would show is an increased pattern of dropouts; this will in no way decrease the dropout rate, but will only make it easier to rework the numbers and fool the state's citizenry. This new system the CDE is requesting is unworkable – that is, unless it is a national system. You see, students often leave when their parents find jobs in other states; and students even transfer to private schools and are homeschooled – some underground. As such, unless the education monster wants a national student reporting system with Draconian controls, spending such money seems foolish.

In conclusion, it seems obvious to us that public school districts have been lying for years, even decades perhaps. If San Bernardino is the example of this nation's worsening education crisis, we are in deep trouble. As bad as the state looks with a dropout rate of 33%, it looks even worse when looking at San Bernardino's 64% dropout rate. We suspect the truth lies somewhere in between, which in our opinion is disgraceful.

There has to be an alternative.

Chapter 17

New York's Great Tenure Debate

There is no accountability in the public school system – except for coaches.
You know what happens to a losing coach. You fire him.
A losing teacher can go on losing for 30 years and then go to glory.
– Ross Perot
Dallas Morning News, 1984

On June 28, 2008, the Associated Press reported that terminating or even disciplining a public school tenured teacher is a long and costly procedure.

One such example is the case of an unnamed teacher from Long Island, New York, who stayed on the district's payroll with a salary of $113,559 a year, even after pleading guilty to her fifth DWI arrest in seven years. Though the teacher will likely go to prison, an educator can remain a paid employee for many months, even past a year in some cases, until an impartial arbitrator determines a course for termination or a lesser penalty.

For many public school district officials, this nightmare scenario is all too common, which has led to the great debate over tenure. The original intent of tenure was academic freedom, but it is obvious to us that it has now become a shield for bad teachers.

The above case exemplifies the tremendous problem facing public school districts in New York and the rest of the United States. Supporters for tenure reform cite countless examples of failure of the status quo; for example, it cost about $250,000 to fire a teacher in New York City, and teachers are often paid, even though they have been convicted of a crime.
Simply stated, protecting a teacher's job has far outweighed their performance in the classroom, which has led to a decline of education in our public schools. We now have a dysfunctional public education system that favors teachers and administrators

over the value of the children, which is contrary to common sense. And many teachers realize it, yet continue to teach, knowing well that they are burnt out and are harming the students they are suppose to help. This type of thinking has become all too common and the results are obvious, just look around.

Yet, instead of demanding the elimination of a failed system, an ally of the education monster, the government goon, continues to tinker with a failed public school scheme. In this case, New York legislators and state governor David Paterson agreed to a bill that would revoke the teacher's certification if convicted of a sex crime. Well now, isn't this great? But why stop there, why don't they also include other criminal activities? Simply stated, most politicians understand that they better not mess with the powerful education monster and its machine of allies, or these state officials will be thrown out of office.

The government goon knows well how powerful the education monster is, and fears its reprisals; but what the government goon fears even more is the awakening of the American public, which will happen in time.

The Center for Union Facts recently launched a $1 million campaign to seek out this country's 10 worst teachers. The group claims that unions defend bad teachers with protective policies over a more common sense approach of paying teachers and administrators for performing well, instead of how long they have taught.

Of course, New York is not alone with this ongoing problem and tenure laws vary from state to state. However, in New York, a process for termination can take up to 18 months, which results in the loss of hundreds of thousands of dollars to lawyers and arbitrators. This money could have gone to student programming, but instead it goes to protecting a failed system of corruption – how sad.

On average, it costs nearly $250,000 to fire a teacher, which resulted in millions of dollars lost for New York City in 2007. As well, if an administrative hearing's decision is favorable to the teacher, all money must be paid back, with interest; which no doubt holds back most administrators from reacting too early, or in many cases, at all.

In fact, between 1995 and 2005, the state of New York held 633 disciplinary hearings, with 60% coming from New York City alone. Of these cases, 184 cases were terminated and 234 were simply placed on suspension. There was no mention of 215 case outcomes, but if the decisions were favorable to the teachers, all expenses had to have been reimbursed, as mentioned above. Just taking a broad number, if it cost $200,000 to handle each of the 633 cases, the cost during this period would amount to a staggering $126.6 million. Can anyone say WOW?

Just for comparison, the Center for Union Facts also said that between 1995 and 2005, 112 tenured teachers faced termination in Los Angeles, and 47 tenured teachers faced termination in New Jersey during the same period.

So how long does it take to acquire a tenured position, one might ask? In New York, for example, it only takes three years; but some districts across the country have much higher standards. So why do we continue to put up with such nonsense? Simply stated, any attack on tenure is a call to arms and will result in the full fury of the education monster being unleashed, as has happened so often before.

There has to be an alternative.

Chapter 18

Ivy League Education

For every action there is an equal and opposite government program.
– Bob Wells

One would think that this country is not paying enough to educate this nation's children; at least this is what the education monster keeps telling us.

Well, if this is the case and the education monster is right, why are we paying more to educate this nation's children than some elite private high schools? This is the truth for one major city, which is paying almost $19,000 a year to educate its children. Is this a sign of the future? Wake up America! This might be coming to your town, city or state soon; that is, if the education monster gets its way.

The city of Pittsburgh' school district is, interestingly enough, paying $18,719 to educate its 28,265 public school students. Can anyone believe this astronomical figure?

As mentioned in previous chapters, the national average ranges in the $11,000 to $12,000 area and is quickly moving higher. Yet, the state average for Pennsylvania is only about $10,000.

Now, let's compare that to several of the areas renowned private schools, like Kiski, which charges $19,500 a year. On the other hand, Pittsburgh's Central Catholic High School charges only about $7,000 per year. Or, how about the University of Pittsburgh, which can give a quality college education for about $12,000 for two semesters.

The public school educated elite in Pittsburgh has a budget of $529.1 million at their disposal, yet all that could be achieved were reading proficiencies that ranged in the 50 percentile for eighth and 11th graders, while fifth graders ranged in the 46% range. And math witnessed similar results, with fifth graders holding firm in the 55% range, eighth graders in the 46% range and 11th graders performing an outstanding 40.5%, which was by the way an improvement from 38.8%. Sensational! The city should certainly be pleased with that wonderful improvement, and the money they spent.

Nevertheless, there is news that is even more wonderful. The percentage of fifth graders who advanced in math showed remarkable improvements, from 31.6% to 40.3%. Not to be outdone, though, reading scores went in the opposite direction, from 23.7% to 19.7%. No wonder the district missed state averages in math and reading for every grade measured.

Now, enough of the joking comments for a moment. This serious problem is but the tip of the iceberg that will hit this country in the coming decades if something is not done right away.

The idea that more money can solve this problem is absurd, which, as the example of Pittsburgh's public school district paying some $19,000 a year to get mediocrity, proves. How can this be, one might ask? Simple, the education monster has complete control of the district and the purses that support it; otherwise, this would never have been allowed to happen in the first place.

This example was used to illustrate the absurdity of the education monster's request for additional funding. Plainly stated, the problem is not a lack of funding; rather, the problem is a fundamental conundrum with the system itself.

Like we have stated again and again in this book, dismantle the public school system and use the money, via a voucher program, to give every child a chance at a quality education. There is only one simple solution to this problem – destroy the system that supports the education monster.

By doing so, this nation can assure a quality education to each child in the United States, thereby guaranteeing the future of our great nation.

There has to be an alternative.

Chapter 19

Staggering Statistics

A single death is a tragedy; a million deaths is a statistic. – Joseph Stalin

The problems within public education have been going on for decades; as such, it might be appropriate to look at some statistics.

In 1995, Steve Dasbach wrote,

> But any effort to 'save' the foundering government school system – whether with more federal money, smaller class sizes, or morality-based teaching – is doomed to fail.

This is, indeed, an enlightening quote from our past; but this warning did nothing to stop the education elite from implementing the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

Dasbach also gave the following statistics, or what he called the "10 Signposts of Failure."

> Between 1960 and 1995, average per-pupil spending in U.S. public schools rose 212% in inflation-adjusted dollars.
> Between 1960 and 1995, the student/teacher ratio has dropped by 35% – from approximately 26 students for every one U.S. public school teacher to only 17.
>
> Between 1960 and 1995, the average salary of U.S. public school teachers jumped 45% in inflation-adjusted dollars.

In 1994, fewer than 50% of the personnel employed by U.S. public schools were teachers.

American 12th graders rank 19th out of 21 industrialized countries in mathematics achievement and 16th out of 21 nations in science.

In fourth grade, 77% of children in urban high-poverty schools are reading "below basic" levels on the National Assessment of Educational Progress tests.

Since 1983, over 10 million public school students have reached the 12th grade level without learning to read at the basic level.

Since 1983, more than 20 million students have reached the 12th grade unable to do basic math.

Since 1983, more than 25 million students have reached the 12th grade not knowing the essentials of U.S. history.

In 1995, nearly 30% of first-time college freshmen enrolled in at least one remedial course to compensate for a sub-standard high school education.

Krista Kafer of the Heritage Foundation reported the following education statistics from 2000 (what follows is a condensed version):

Thirty-two percent of fourth graders are proficient in reading.

Twenty six percent are proficient in mathematics.

Twenty-nine percent in science.

Eighteen percent in history.

Proficiency rates decline by the 12th grade in most subjects.

Over half of all poor students fail to reach the basic level on NAEP assessments in most subjects.

Seventy-one percent of students graduated on time from high school.
Just over half of minority students graduated.

Georgia had the lowest graduation rate at 54% and Iowa the highest at 93%.
Roughly, 9% of dropouts earned a general educational development (GED) credential or equivalent.

Approximately 47 million children attend public elementary and secondary schools,

5.9 million attend private schools.

As many as 1.9 million children are homeschooled.

As of the 2000 school year, there were 92,012 public elementary and secondary schools in the United States, and 27,223 private elementary and secondary schools.

Despite higher than average per-pupil expenditures, American eighth graders ranked 19th out of 38 countries on the most recent international mathematics comparison, the Third International Mathematics and Science Study-Repeat (TIMSS-R) of 1999.

American students scored 18th out of 38 countries in science. On the TIMSS 1995 study, which tested 12th graders, American students were ranked 19th out of 21 countries in both math and science general knowledge.

Over half of all public schools reported a criminal incident to the police.

The average salary for public elementary and secondary school teachers is $42,898.

The average public school has 110 computers.

Ninety-eight percent of public schools have access to the Internet.

The number of computers in public schools increased from a ratio of over 63 students for every computer in 1985 to less than five per computer in 2000.

Dr. James Heckman and Paul A. LaFontain, authors of *The American High School Graduation Rate: Trends and Levels*, revealed an update on the progress of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2008 and national graduation rates (what follows is a condensed version):

The true high school graduation rate is around 75% for all students, which is lower than the NCES official reported rate of 88% but higher than *Education Week*'s highly reported on-time graduation rate of 70%.

The overall graduation rate peaked in the late 1960s at around 80%, but has steadily declined four to five points since then.

The decrease in overall graduation rates is largely due to the decline of male students failing to graduate.
The male graduation rate has declined by nearly seven percentage points over the past 40 years, while the female graduation rate has remained relatively steady.

College enrollments over the last 40 years have declined especially among males, which is partly due to the decline in high school graduation rates.

The gap in graduation rates between white students and their Black and Hispanic peers has not narrowed over the past 35 years.

Graduation rates for white (approximately 81%) students are almost 16 points higher than for Black and Hispanic students who graduate at about a 65% rate even though recent estimates for graduation rates of minority students have ranged from 50% to 85%.

The increase in graduation rates for minority students, according to census data, is due to the increase of minority males receiving a GED in prison, not to an actual increase in minority students receiving a high school diploma.

The decline in graduation rates cannot be attributed to the increase in recent immigrant student enrollments.

Education Week reported the following in January 2008 (what follows is a condensed version):

Students in northeastern states have a greater chance for success than students in other parts of the country.

Overall, our nation's schools received a D plus in the academic preparation of our school children. The grade is based on the academic status and growth over time in math and reading scores, as well as the narrowing of achievement gaps between racial and socioeconomic groups of students.

States are not doing well at ensuring their students are ready to start school. They also aren't doing well at preparing students for college or the workforce after high school. They need to implement better school ready and college/workforce readiness standards.

NCES reported their *Highlights from PISA 2006: Performance of U.S. 15 Year-Old Students in Science and Mathematics Literacy in an International Context* (what follows is a condensed and amended version) – (what follows is a condensed version):

U.S. 15 year-olds scored (489) below the international average (500) in overall science literacy, which was as good as or better than 13 countries but not as good as the remaining 16 countries.

U.S. 15 year-olds score of 474 was below the international average but similar or better than 25 countries. However, 31 countries outperformed the United States.

The U.S. score of 483 in 2003 was not measurably different from the score of 474 in 2006.

The United States has a greater percentage (15.2%) of students with an immigrant background than the international average (9.3%). However, several higher performing countries including Canada (21.1%), New Zealand (21.3%), Australia (21.9%), and Switzerland (22.4%) had a higher proportion of immigrant students than the U.S.

In 2007, the National Research Center for Career and Technical Education performed an analysis of student outcomes in two states and determined the following information about dual enrollment programs (Notation: A dual enrollment program is where a student takes college and high school classes at the same time.) – (what follows is a condensed version):

Dual enrollment students were more likely than other similar students to:

Earn a regular high school diploma.

Enroll in the state's university system.

Achieve a higher GPA, especially for those students who took five or more college courses while still in high school.

Remain in college three years after graduating high school.

Earn more college credits by their third year, especially for those students who took five or more college courses while still in high school.

Low-income dual enrollment students were more likely than higher-income dual enrollment students to:

Enroll in college after high school.

Achieve a higher GPA their first semester and have a higher cumulative GPA after three years of college.

According to the College Board's annual College-Bound Seniors report, SAT scores declined again in 2007 (what follows is a condensed version):

The nation's graduating Class of 2007 had a combined score of 1511 (of all three sections — Critical Reading, Mathematics, and Writing), which is a seven-point drop from 2006.

Scores declined in all three tested areas from 2006 to 2007.

Critical reading dropped from 503 to 502.

And mathematics from 518 to 515.
In its first two years of being required, writing also dropped, from 497 to 494.

Over the last 10 years, scores declined by three points in critical reading but improved by four points in mathematics.

Gaps widened between both Black and white students in critical reading and mathematics.

Gaps also widened in critical reading and mathematics between Other, Hispanic, and white student categories.

Males continue to outperform females in mathematics (533 to 499) and critical reading (504 to 502), but females outperform males in writing (500 to 489).

An August 2007 report from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) offered a comprehensive look at the current condition of rural education. A few of their findings included (what follows is a condensed version):

Thirty-one percent of fourth grade, 30% of eighth grade, and 33% of 12th grade public school students in rural areas scored at or above proficient on

the 2005 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading assessment.

Thirty-six percent of fourth grade, 29% of eighth grade, and 21% of 12 grade public school students scored at or above proficient in on the 2005 NAEP math assessment.

In 2004, the high school dropout rate among 16- to 24-year-olds in rural areas was 11%—higher than in suburban areas (9%) and lower than in cities (13%).

The average freshman graduate rate for public high school students in rural areas during the 2002-2003 school year was 75% compared with 65% in cities, 76% in towns, and 79% in suburbs.

Rural public schools tended to receive a smaller percentage of their revenues in 2003-04 from federal sources (9%) than city public schools (11%), but a larger percentage than suburban public schools (6%).

The number of public school students per instructional computer with Internet access in school was lower in rural areas (3.0 to 1) in 2005 than in suburban (4.3 to 1) and city (4.2 to 1) schools.

Rural public schools generally had a lower student teacher ratio (15.3 to 1) than public schools in other locales in 2003-04.

Public school teachers in rural areas earned less ($43,000) on average in 2003-04 than their peers in towns ($45,900), suburbs ($45,700), and cities ($44,000), even after adjusting for geographic cost differences.

The National School Boards Association and Grunwald Associates LLC released some interesting data about student online activities on August 14, 2007 (what follows is a condensed version):

Among students with Internet access, 96% reported using social networking technologies, including chatting, text messaging, blogging, and online communities such as MySpace.

The most popular activities reported were posting messages and downloading music and videos, but students also blog, post photos, and create their own Web sites.

Ten percent reported participating in collaborative projects online.

On average, students spend about nine hours a week online engaged in social networking activities.

The study found that most schools have rules against social networking activities. But almost 70% have student Web site programs, and almost 50% participate in online collaborative projects with other schools.

The report urges school leaders to consider ways to tap students' online savvy as an educational tool as well as for other purposes such as staff development.

According to the 2007 ACT National Curriculum Survey, there is a gap between what students are learning in high school and what they are expected to know when they enter college. It revealed (what follows is a condensed version):

> All Teachers:
>
> High school teachers believe it's important they cover more content topics and skills to prepare their students for college, while college instructors believe fewer but more targeted content topics and skills are important.
>
> 3/4 of high school teachers believe that meeting state standards prepares students for success in college, while almost 2/3 of college instructors disagree.
>
> Over twice as many high school teachers (32%) than college instructors (13%) believe today's high school graduates are better prepared.
>
> English/Writing Teachers:
>
> College instructors believe that basic mechanics of writing skills are important for success in a college English course, while high school teachers believe that topic and idea development skills are more important. College instructors felt this because they had to re-teach basic elements before moving onto more critical thinking/reading components.
>
> Mathematics Teachers:
> While high school teachers felt it was more important to expose students to more advanced topics, college instructors felt it was more important for entering college students to have a rigorous understanding of fundamental math processes and skills.
>
> Reading Teachers:
>
> College remedial-course reading teachers spend more time on reading strategies to improve reading comprehension than high school teachers.
>
> Science Teachers:
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> High school science teachers believe science content is more important, while both middle school and college instructors believe process skills hold higher importance for college readiness in science.

A 2007 report, which was prepared by the Center for Education Policy (CEP), called into question the validity of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) results (what follows is a condensed version):

> Not surprisingly, both fans and critics of NCLB find fodder in the report to support their views. Supporters zero in on gains made in student achievement as evidence the law is working as intended. Opponents emphasize that gains can't be attributed to the law.
>
> Therefore, what insights does the report shed on NCLB?

The report makes a strong case for concluding that since 2002, student achievement has gone up in most states, although by how much isn't clear.

The biggest gains were in math and reading at the elementary level.

But the report said gains cannot be attributed directly to No Child Left Behind, as considerable federal, state, and local reforms improvement efforts have all been underway before and since 2002.

Nevertheless, No Child Left Behind did not appear to have harmed student achievement.

The CEP itself noted in the report the following factors that complicate analysis:

Each state has its own assessments aligned to its own standards and these vary from state to state.

Some states have separate accountability systems that run parallel with NCLB.

There is no single point in time when all states implemented NCLB. States periodically make major changes to their assessments, making comparisons to past performances unreliable.

States and districts continually implement their own reforms and policies.

Without the ability to isolate the impact of NCLB from other reforms and policies, it is difficult to determine whether NCLB is the real source for the change in student achievement.

Education Week conducted its second annual special report *Diplomas Count 2007: Ready for What? Preparing Students for College, Careers, and Life After High School*. Here are some of the staggering findings (what follows is a condensed version):

The report states that there are still over a million students who do not graduate high school on-time with even a standard diploma.

Many of these students are likely to take positions that pay just above the poverty line, if they are able to find a job at all.

Even students graduating with a standard or advanced diploma will need extensive training, either vocational or postsecondary education, to qualify for many high-level, high-paying positions.

Only 21 states require students to pass an exit exam to earn a diploma.

In 38 states, K-12 systems offer pathways leading to industry-recognized certificates.

Jobs that require at least a bachelor's degree along with extensive skill, knowledge, and experience have a median income level of close to $60,000 per year.

74% percent of white students graduated on time, compared to 54% and 58% of Black and Hispanic students, respectively.

More females (74%) than males (66%) graduated on time.

Of the 50 largest school districts, 10 (Detroit, Cleveland, Dallas, New York City, Los Angeles, Milwaukee, Denver, Miami-Dade County, and Philadelphia) graduated less than 50% of their students on time.

Approximately one-third of students who do not graduate on time failed to make the transition from ninth to 10th grade.

Hispanic students saw the largest rise in graduation rates, from 52% in 2000 to 58% in 2004.

Black students were also more likely to graduate on time by increasing their graduation rates from 48% to 53% during the same time period.
Rates for Asian, white, and American Indian students also saw modest increases.

Utah, New Jersey, and Iowa graduated more than 80% of their students on time while South Carolina, Nevada, and Georgia graduated less than 60% of their students on time.

A 2007 report by the National School Boards Association's Council of Urban Boards of Education (CUBE) entitled *Where We Teach: The CUBE Survey of Urban School Climate*, gave the following thoughts by teachers and administrators and their expectations (what follows is a condensed and amended version) – (Notation: Notice the difference between what administrators and teachers think about public schools.) – (what follows is a condensed version):

Administrators were more likely than teachers to feel that most of their students were capable of high achievement in high school and can be successful at a community college or university.

Eighty-five percent of administrators disagreed with the statement, 'Most students at this school would not be successful at community college or university' compared to 58% of teachers.

The majority of teachers and administrators believe that students are motivated to learn; however, almost twice as many teachers (29%) than administrators (16%) believe their students were not motivated to learn.
Most teachers believe their administrators trust their professional judgment (86%), while a smaller majority of administrators believe their teachers exercise good professional judgment (76%).

Only 68% of teachers feel they would benefit from more professional development, while 95% of administrators feel it would be beneficial to their teachers.

Administrators (81%) are more likely than teachers (57%) to feel that parents support the school and its activities.

Almost three quarters of administrators do not believe students carry guns or knives in their school compared to half of teachers.

In a 2007 report, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) said that in the most recent National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) (what follows is a condensed version):

12th grade students' reading scores dropped six percentage points between 1992 and 2005, while math leveled out during the same period.

Reading scores declined by six percentage points between 1992 and 2005.

The percent of students scoring at or above the proficient level has been steadily declining since 1992.

48% percent of students who reported they expected to attend a four-year college after graduating scored at or above proficient, compared with 15% of those students who planned on working full-time after graduating.

The achievement gap between Hispanic students and their white peers has not changed significantly over the same time period, even though the percent of Hispanic 12th graders has doubled (7% in 1992 compared to 17% in 2005).

Female 12th graders significantly outperformed their male counterparts by 13 percentage points.

23% percent of all 12th graders scored at or above the proficient level in math.

Only 6% of Black students and 8% of Hispanic students reached the proficient level compared to 29% of white students.

32% percent of 12th graders failed to score at the basic level in math.

Twelfth grade males outperformed their female peers by two percentage points in the overall math score.

Schools with the greatest need are given less, according to the most recent Education Trust report *Funding Gaps 2006* (what follows is a condensed version):

The 10 highest spending states spent 50% more dollars per pupil than the 10 lowest spending states that also serve a disproportional share of the nation's poor children.

Title I exacerbates the funding gap between wealthy and poor states.

Wealthy states that are able to spend more on education receive more Title I funds per poor students than poorer states that are unable to spend as much, even though they serve more poor students.

What are the spending differences among school districts within states?

High poverty districts receive fewer local and state funds than low poverty districts in 26 of the 49 states studied.

A typical high poverty elementary school of 400 students would receive $522,800 less per year than an affluent elementary school of 400 students.

How are education funds allocated within school districts?

Less money is spent on teacher salaries in high poverty schools than on teacher salaries in low poverty schools within the same districts.

In Austin, Texas, for example, the average salary for teachers in their high poverty schools is $3837 less than the average salary for teachers in their low poverty schools.

According to the 2007 report, *America's Perfect Storm: Three Forces Changing Our Nation's Future*, there is a higher premium for highly skilled workers today than there was 30 years ago (what follows is a condensed version):

On-time high school graduation rates have remained steady at around 70% since 1995, but are closer to 50% for disadvantaged minorities.

Fewer Blacks, Hispanics, and Asians have the literacy skills needed to compete in today's labor market when compared to their white counterparts.

While the percent of manufacturing jobs has declined from 33% in 1950 to 11% in 2003, the percent of jobs associated with a college-level education accounted for 67% of job growth between 1994 and 2000.

The majority of the U.S. population growth between 2000 and 2015 will be attributable to foreign-born immigrants.

The Hispanic population is expected to increase from 14% of the population in 2005 to 20% in 2030.

The majority of Hispanic 16- to 64-year-olds (57%) is foreign born, and many lack a high school diploma.

In the next 25 years, the average level of literacy and numeracy skills will decrease and the gap between adults proficient in literacy and numeracy skills and adults who are not proficient will grow, causing greater economic disparity.

The U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics report in 2007, *Academic Pathways, Preparation, and Performance: A Descriptive Overview of the Transcripts from the High School Graduating Class of 2003-04*, showed Black, Hispanic, and poor students don't take as many harder courses in high school as their white and more affluent peers, which results in lower assessment scores (what follows is a condensed version):

Fewer minority and poor students earned credit in advanced placement (AP) or international baccalaureate (IB) courses.

Thirty-three percent of white and 53% of Asian students completed at least one AP/IB course compared with 25% of Hispanic and 16% of Black students.

Thirty-three percent of white and 42% of Asian graduates completed an academic curriculum compared with 18% of Hispanic and 22% of Black graduates.

Students who took more academic courses scored higher on a 12th grade math assessment given to study participants.

Eighty-four percent of graduates who earned the highest number of academic course credits can perform simple problem solving, requiring the understanding of low-level math concepts.

Fifty-seven percent have an understanding of intermediate-level math concepts and/or have the ability to formulate multi-step solutions to word problems.

Graduates who earned more academic credits had higher grade point averages.

Graduates who spent more time participating in extracurricular activities were more likely to complete an academic curriculum and score higher on the math assessment.

More female graduates completed at least one math course beyond algebra II than male graduates.

African-American and Hispanic students make less academic growth during the academic year than white students, according to the *Northwest Evaluation Association report Achievement Gaps: An Examination of Differences in Student Achievement and Growth* (2006) (what follows is a condensed version):

Minority students and students from high poverty schools tend to enter the third grade at lower achievement levels in both math and reading.

White students and students from low poverty schools have higher scores at the end of the school year across all grades and subjects than minority students and students from high poverty schools.

Growth rates for minority students and students in high poverty schools are not large enough to close the achievement gap by the time they graduate high school.

When comparing students who start the school year at the same achievement level, minority students and students in high poverty schools make less academic growth during the school year than white students and students in low poverty schools.

Low performing students show positive growth during the summer, while high performing students suffer negative growth.

According to the *MetLife Survey of the American Teacher 2006* (what follows is a condensed version):

> Regarding expectations and experiences, 44% of our public school teachers are not satisfied with their careers, etc.
>
> Almost half (46%) of all principals rate their teachers as excellent.
>
> Most teachers plan on leaving the profession.
>
> Black teachers are twice as likely to plan on leaving the profession as other teachers.
>
> Younger teachers reported feeling more prepared for the classroom and are less likely to report plans to leave the profession than veteran teachers.
>
> There is a large disconnect between principals and deans/chairpersons of education on how prepared new teachers are for their first assignment.
>
> Twenty-seven percent of principals believe new teachers are not prepared to maintain order and discipline.

United States High School Sophomores: A Twenty-Two Year Comparison, 1980-2002 (2006) reported attributes and attitudes of sophomores from the years 1980, 1990, and 2002 (what follows is a condensed version):

> The percent enrollment of minority students in U.S. high schools has increased from 25% in 1980 to 40% in 2002.
>
> Fewer students reported that English is their native language in 2002 (86%) than in 1980 (95%).
>
> The percent of Black students reported in the lowest socioeconomic (SES) quarter decreased from 46% in 1980 to 35% in 2002.
>
> A greater number of Black students were enrolled in college preparatory programs in 2002 (50%) than in 1980 (27%).
>
> The percent of white students enrolled in college preparatory programs increased from 35% in 1980 to 53% in 2002.
>
> More Black and Hispanic students in 2002 expected to receive at least a four-year degree (77% and 73%, respectively) than in 1980 (41% and 33%).
> In 2002, more white students expected to earn at least a four-year degree (81%) than did white students in 1980 (41%).
>
> In 2002, more students (73%) believed their teachers thought going to college was the most important thing for them to do right after high school than did students in 1980 (32%).

The Alliance for Excellent Education found that the nation loses more than $3.7 billion annually due to the large number of high school graduates unprepared to succeed in college and the workforce (2006) (what follows is a condensed version):

> Almost one-third of all college freshmen enroll in remedial courses.

Forty-two percent of community college freshman enroll in at least one remedial course.

Twenty percent of freshman in four-year postsecondary institutions enroll in at least one remedial course.

One-third of community college freshman who enroll in remedial courses are 19 or younger.

$3.7 billion is lost annually due to high school graduates unprepared for college or the workforce.

$1.4 billion is spent to provide remedial education to students who have recently graduated high school.

The economy loses $2.3 billion in reduced earning potential of students who leave school without a degree.

Eighty-three percent of students who enroll in a reading remediation course fail to complete a four-year degree within eight years.

Here are the findings from the 38th Annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the *Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools in 2006* (what follows is a condensed version):

Only 21% of the public gives the nation's schools an A or B.

Seventy-one percent of the public want to fix the nation's schools.

40% would approve the use of vouchers.

Fifty-eight percent believe local school boards should have the greatest influence over what is taught in schools.

Sixty-nine percent do not think schools should be judged on a single test score.

Eighty-one percent believe tests should be based on other subjects in addition to math and English.

Eighty-one percent believe schools should be judged on how much improvement students made during the school year instead of just the percent who passed the end-of-year assessment.
Sixty-seven percent believe that the emphasis on standardized test will lead to teachers "teaching to the test."

Eighty-eight percent believe it is important to close the achievement gap between white students and Black and Hispanic students.

Eighty-one percent believe the gap can be closed while maintaining high standards.
Seventy-three percent believe public high school students do not work hard enough in school.

Data released in 2006 by the Organisation of Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) reported that a high school diploma is more important in the United States than in any other country (what follows is a condensed version):

> American adults age 25 to 64 who have not completed high school earn only 65 cents for every dollar earned by a high school graduate.
>
> Those who lack a high school credential are more likely to earn below median wages in the United States than in any other country except Denmark, and they are more likely to be unemployed.
>
> Eighty-seven percent of younger U.S. adults age 25 to 34 have completed high school or its equivalent (e.g., a GED).
>
> This was not the case 40 years ago when U.S. 55- to 64-year-olds had the highest high school attainment rates in their age group.
>
> The OECD explains that other countries have been rapidly improving their completion rates, while graduation in the United States remains relatively stable.
>
> The United States' lack of significant growth in postsecondary attainment rates may be attributable to the fact that only 50% of American students entering a postsecondary institution receive a degree — one of the lowest rates of all OECD countries.
>
> Students who manage to complete their postsecondary degree command significantly higher salaries in the United States, where postsecondary graduates receive 72% more in wages than those with only a high school degree.
>
> The average class size in American elementary schools is 23, above the OECD average of 21.
>
> Wages for teachers in the United States are 13% higher than for teachers in other OECD countries.
>
> There is virtually no U.S. gender gap in the amount of formal schooling completed by men and women, making it first in the world.

The Center for Public Education reported that the average combined SAT score in math and reading for the class of 2006 dropped seven points from last year (what follows is a condensed version):

> Overall, the number of test-takers in 2006 dropped by about 10,000 from 2005.
>
> Just fewer than 1.5 million students — 48% of all high school seniors — took the 2006 SAT.
>
> The critical reading section accounted for most of the drop — the average reading score declined five points to 503, its lowest level since 1994 (499).
>
> On the math section, the average score declined two points to 518.

Girls outperformed boys on the new writing section by 11 points — a significant result given that boys have outscored girls on both verbal and math sections for decades.

The percentage of students taking more advanced math courses increased while the percentage of students taking English composition and grammar decreased.

The U.S. Department of Education released its 2006 report *Comparing Private Schools and Public Schools Using Hierarchical Linear Modeling* (Notation: Even more propaganda from the education monster) – (what follows is a condensed version):

Public school fourth grade reading scores did not significantly differ from private schools.

Public school fourth graders performed higher than their private school peers in math.

The difference was statistically significant.

Public school eighth grade reading scores were lower than private school scores, a difference that was also statistically significant.

Public school eighth grade math scores were about the same as private schools.

Catholic schools performed about the same as all private.

Lutheran schools scored significantly higher than all private schools as well as public schools.

Conservative Christian schools scored significantly lower than both public schools and all private schools.

Authors view: Private schools, unlike public schools, do not teach for the assessment test; instead they generally teach those things children will need to be successful in life. Yes, private schools teach the basics, but they also stress values.

The Civil Rights Project at Harvard University published its *Tracking Achievement Gaps and Assessing the Impact of NCLB on the Gaps: An In-depth Look Into National and State Reading and Math Outcome Trends* in 2006 (NCLB=No Child Left Behind and NAEP=National Assessment of Educational Progress) – (what follows is a condensed version):

Reading scores were relatively unchanged for both fourth and eighth grades (1990-2005).

Math scores improved significantly for both fourth and eighth grades (1990-2005).

For both subjects and grades, the growth rates were unchanged post-NCLB.

Poor and minority subgroups only showed small growth (1990-2005).

There has not been any significant narrowing of achievement gaps post-NCLB.

Only eighth grade Hispanic math students achieved greater gains post-NCLB than pre-NCLB and had significantly narrowed the white-Hispanic achievement gap.

A large majority of states showed only small improvement in reading (1990-2005).

Many states made significant gains in math (1990-2005).

Most states did not show any change in their post-NCLB NAEP growth rates for either grade and in either subject.

Most states were not successfully closing their large achievement gaps.

States with strong pre-NCLB accountability policies made greater pre-NCLB gains in both math and reading, but growth did not accelerate post-NCLB.

These states generally started out with low NAEP scores in the 1990s.

Reading pre- and post-NCLB scores were not affected by state accountability policies.

State accountability policies had little impact on the achievement gaps in most states.

States that have strong state accountability policies have larger gaps between their state proficiency rates and NAEP proficiency rates.

The percent of students meeting proficiency on state assessments is twice that of students meeting NAEP proficiency, on average.

Poor and minority students have a harder time meeting NAEP standards than their state standards.

Since NCLB, there have been greater gains in state assessments than on NAEP in 25 states.

The Education Trust released their 2006 report *Teaching Inequality: How Poor and Minority Students are Shortchanged on Teacher Quality* (what follows is a condensed and amended version):

Wisconsin

Non-white students and poor students are disproportionately assigned to novice teachers.

In high-minority schools, one in four teachers had fewer than three years of teaching experience compared with about one in 10 in the lowest-minority schools.

Ohio

Teachers who meet the state's definition of "highly qualified" are more likely to be teaching in schools with less poverty, fewer non-white students, and with higher achievement.

In the poorest high schools, nearly one in four math teachers did not meet the state's definition of highly qualified compared with one in 20 in the lowest-poverty high schools.

Illinois

An analysis of schools ranked by a five-point index (Teacher Quality Index or TQI) found that a majority of schools with the highest concentrations of minority students ranked lowest on the TQI.

Similarly, among schools with the most low-income students, 84% were the bottom quarter of teacher quality as denoted by the TQI.

According to the 2005 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) (Notation: More examples of teaching for the test, which fails by the time children get older. The education monster will stop at nothing to prove its worth. Notice most of these improvements are modest at best, in spite of the billions being spent.) – (what follows is a condensed version):

Elementary students are smarter in science than their peers were a decade ago.

Fourth graders of every racial, ethnic, and economic group have improved and achievement gaps between them have narrowed.

In contrast, progress by eighth graders is flat, and the performance of high school seniors is falling, particularly in the field of earth science.

The good news about fourth graders:

Fourth graders' overall performance improved by four points on the NAEP scale between 1996 and 2005.

Moreover, gains were reported for each racial and ethnic group.

Low-performing students made the greatest gains.

Fourth graders performing at the 'basic level' or better showed the most improvement, from 63% in 1996 to 68% in 2005.
In comparison, the percentage of students at 'proficient' or better showed little gains, from 31–32% over the same period.

Achievement gaps between majority and minority student groups remain large, but have narrowed significantly at the fourth-grade level.

Conversely, Eighth-grade science in stasis.

Overall eighth-grade performance has not moved over the last decade.

Percent of eighth graders scored at the NAEP 'basic' level or better in 1996 compared to 59% in 2005 — a change that is not statistically significant and, therefore, should be interpreted as no change.

Thirty-two percent of our eighth graders were proficient or better in 1996, and 32% were at this level nine years later.

The achievement gaps between Hispanic and white students and between low-income students and others were unchanged.
The senior slump

Overall, 12th-grade performance declined by three scale points between 1996 and 2005.

Most of the decline occurred at the top end: 24% of 12th graders performed at proficient or above in 1996.

Only 20% were at this level in 2005.

Knowledge of earth science fell the most, a decline of six scale points over the decade.

Performance in physical and life sciences fell by two points each.

The Black–white and Hispanic–white gaps did not change and remained wide: 36 and 28 scale points, respectively.

According to a 2006 report from the Public Education Network (PEN), public criticism over the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) is on the rise. The report, *Open to the Public: The Public Speaks Out on No Child Left Behind*, identified three major concerns among parents and communities (what follows is a condensed version):

NCLB's accountability structure: While the public supports accountability, they reject using a single test as an accurate measure of school performance without considering student progress or other performance indicators.

School labeling: The public is angered by labeling schools 'in need of improvement' because the label is typically interpreted as failing, thus eroding public support for these schools.

Short shrift to NCLB's parent and community involvement provisions: The report found that school and district personnel lack the capacity to help parents and community members to participate in a meaningful way.

The 2006 report *Where We Learn: The CUBE Survey of Urban School Climate* claimed (what follows is a condensed version):

Nearly one in four students reported feeling uncertain about their safety in school.

One in three students did not believe that teachers were fair to everyone.

Younger students tended to be more positive than older students.

Elementary students are far more likely than their older peers to report that they feel safe and their teachers are fair, able to stop bullying, and respect students.

Race, on the other hand, 'predicted how students would respond in almost every category.'

For example, Hispanic students were the most likely to say that teachers respect students and are fair to everyone.

Black students were the least likely to say so.

Very few students of any race believed that students of other races do better in school than they do themselves.

The report uncovered some questions that need closer investigation in order to improve school climate for all students. These are:

The degree to which students witness others being bullied.

Why students in upper grades do not have much confidence that teachers can stop bullying.

Why older students have less trust in their teachers.

Why students of some races are more likely to believe that those of other races do better in school than they do.

In 2005, the report *Unintended Consequences: The Case for Reforming the Staffing Rules in Urban Teachers Union Contracts*, argued that while the rules are intended to address legitimate needs, the rules themselves produce unintended and negative results (what follows is a condensed version):

Instead of hiring teachers based on their merits and the rightness of the match with the school, principals must fill openings with transferring teachers.
The timing of transfers puts urban school districts at a disadvantage when competing for new teaching talent with the suburbs, which typically can make job offers much sooner.

Schools often lose promising teachers who are new to the district because transferring teachers 'bump' the newbies.

The 2005 study, *Similar Students, Different Results: Why Do Some Schools Do Better?,* determined the following practices were found to have the strongest association with high performance as measured by California's API scores (what follows is a condensed version):

Prioritizing student achievement.

Implementing a coherent, standards-based curriculum and instructional program.

Using assessment data to improve student achievement and instruction.

Ensuring availability of instructional resources.

In conclusion, it is obvious to us that data can be used for almost any argument, including the continuance of public schools as we know it, the success of No Child Left Behind, and even more money. Yet, what these statistics tell us is that whites continue to carry the weight of success, while poor and minority students continue to suffer from an inadequately designed public school system. Simply stated, funding, teacher preparedness, parental control, or even student learning levels are not the problem; we believe that the system that has been built up around the education monster has failed a changing culture and needs to be replaced with newer, more modern types of educational opportunities.

There has to be an alternative.

Chapter 20

Protectionism vs. Free Market Education

It is common sense to take a method and try it. If it fails, admit it frankly and try another. But above all, try something.
– Franklin D. Roosevelt

We think it is safe to say that public education has a monopoly on instruction in the United States today. There are, of course, growing fragments of private schools for those who can afford a better education, but for the masses there are few alternatives.

For a growing segment of the United States, homeschooling has become a popular option. However, the education monster, along with its allies, has made it its primary goal to assimilate homeschool children, even if it needs to go to the government goon and court tyrant to stop this movement. The only thing stopping the government goon and the court tyrant from mandating the immediate assimilation of homeschooled children is the hard-working advocacy group called the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA). The HSLDA has time and time again stopped intrusive authorities from violating a parent's choice to take control of a child's education.

In spite of homeschoolers' continued success, the example set by these parents remains a thorn in the side of the education monster, who is bent on stopping any threat to its long-standing authority.

The most popular approach thus far has been to use the power of the press tormenter, but this, too, only worked for a while. In time and after several academic studies became public, the argument that homeschooled students performed poorly was disproved. No matter, the education monster used its oldest and most reliable argument, that children need socialization skills, which can only be gotten in a traditional education setting. With the help of the press tormentor, public schools claimed that children could not get the social skills they needed to be effective American citizens, and for a while, the argument worked with the American public.

However, in time this myth was also dismissed as a lie of the education monster. Academic research once again proved that children would not be adversely harmed by the homeschool experience. No matter, for the scheme was only a stalling tactic, as are others.

The latest effort to thwart homeschooling is to legislate a ruling that homeschool parents must have an advanced degree and be certified to teach their own children. Unfortunately, this argument seemed to have had some early success in California courts. Although, one of our allied vanquishers, the HSLDA, took the homeschool call once again to fight back the threat of the mighty education monster. As the battle waged on, many homeschool parents continued to educate this country's most precious resources, their children, in the safety and comfort of their homes. In the end, California courts reversed an earlier decision, thereby guaranteeing a parent's right to homeschool. Yet, we also know these attacks will not cease and will continue as long as this country allows the education monster to monopolize education. We actually have the real power, but this power must be demanded, for the education monster will not allow itself to be destroyed without a fight.

Yet, the goal of the education monster is its survival, and it will use any of its tricks to stay alive. Whether the education monster wins an argument or not is not the point. Just the threat of the government goon aligning with the court tyrant stops many parents from also leaving the public school system. Like its earlier arguments that children could not learn at home or that they would lack socialization skills, the damage has been done, at least for a while. Like any good doctor will tell you, the first thing one must do to save a patient is to stop the bleeding, even if the patient is going to die. We know well that the education monster is bleeding, and it knows it, too.

There are other attacks on the education monster as well, like that from optional online learning. Yet, any threat to traditional classroom instruction has been fought tooth and nail. However, much of the success from optional online learning has come about in advanced education, such as bachelor's and master's degrees. This movement has resulted in mammoth gains for online programs, only because unlike our public schools, college and university education is not fully entrenched in monopolistic thinking. Nevertheless, because of the foresight of many progressive educators, online instruction is thriving and has enjoyed double-digit growth for well over a decade.

The reason for this success is primarily economics. Free market education, especially in college education circles, is alive and well in the United States, and when left to a market economy, education can be brought to the masses in an economical way.

You see, the education monster can't touch adult learners or deceive those who want to learn; it can only deceive the uneducated and traditionalist thinkers into believing public education is the only true way to learn, which it hopes will forestall its inevitable demise.

Dozens of new online colleges have filled the void for many adult learners who have to work and raise a family. This void was reluctantly filled only because traditional colleges, likened to the education monster, did not believe that there is any other way to educate the masses. This form of thinking is a pervasive problem and is prevalent throughout most educational circles.

However, online education is thriving and enjoying a great deal of success, not only at the college level, but also within the homeschool movement. Many homeschool parents have signed their children up to take online instruction, especially when advanced classes are required. Most homeschool parents have little problem handling early grade instruction, but as the student advances, many parents have found online classes to be a benefit, thereby allowing them to continue their children's education in the safety of the family's home.

Another component of free market education has been private schools, which the education monster says is no better than public schools. We don't argue that private school testing results are similar to those of public schools, but what these results don't tell us is the hidden facts of minority and poorer area schools. Why is it that every time a charter school or voucher is offered to a poor or minority student, parents overwhelmingly jump at the chance to bail out of their local public schools. The answer is simple; minority and poor students are trapped in many of this nation's worst schools, while middle class and wealthy white students often attend many of this country's best schools.

It is unfair to use the statistic that private schools score no better than public schools – for there are so many other facets that are never tested. First and foremost, private schools often bring discipline to a school, something that is often lacking in public schools. The simple threat of expulsion and the student's return to public schools keeps most students and parents and even teachers in line. In fact, teachers are often more willing to work for less pay than their public school counterparts, just because teachers do not want to deal with the unruly children and parents in public schools.

You see, the education monster knows these parents, students and teachers don't want to attend their lesser-quality schools, so it tries to use the statistic game to say they are not better. Again, we say nonsense.

When given a chance, it is without question that a free market education system will work. Our society must, however, find the will to destroy the education monster, in its current form, and its control over our lives.

There has to be other alternatives.

Chapter 21

Charter School Success

Meanwhile, parents, students, and teachers all report higher satisfaction with charter schools. People like them. They cost less money. They raise the academic achievement of poor kids. Go ahead, get a little enthused. – Maggie Gallagher

The immediate response to our suggestion that the current public educational system in the United States must be replaced is, "It can't be done." Our simple response is, if it can be built, it can be destroyed.

There are countless examples of change happening throughout the United States, but to be honest, these examples are only a drop in the proverbial bucket, as the saying goes.

Charter schools are one of the examples we illustrate as a valid solution to traditional public education. Charleston County, South Carolina, has become a haven for charter schooling and will be used to illustrate the possibilities for this nation's educational problems.
Charleston County leads the state of South Carolina with seven charter schools and many more on the way. The reason for this sudden interest in charter schools is a new state law that allows them to be funded by the state. This relinquishment of state funding has spurred a growing interest by parents, educators, and the community at large, which now allows these private ventures to compete directly with public schools.

In essence, these charter schools get money based on average per-pupil revenue, which would normally go to public schools. This direct assault on the once monopolistic public school system of funding has many public educators worried, but parents, children, and the public at large love it. This growth is a direct result of the district's

failing public schools and the public's demand that something be done. It must be stressed, however, that charter schools for the most part fall under the education monster's domain, but these examples are given to add credence to our suggestion that a complete dismantling take place in the future.

Here is a 2009 list of proposed charter schools for Charleston County. We certainly hope each and every one of these proposals are approved and have success. We also believe that such schools should be totally detached from state and local curriculum authority, with their own school boards, which will be accountable for distribution of money only. The only way we are going to destroy the education monster is to sever direct control of how schools are operated. We do, however, feel that since state and local funding is being used, accountability is necessary; but such concerns should be limited to financial accountability only.

Apple Charter School

If approved, the school is scheduled to open in the fall of 2009. The school would be limited to 180 male students in the third through eighth grades. Class size would be limited to 15 students. The St. James Foundation has agreed to lease one of its buildings at a below market rate to help the school get started. The school would be opened to any student with test scores below the state's basic standardized test. The middle school section will focus on vocational training, with courses in plumbing, carpentry, etc. Parents would be required to sign an agreement requiring their involvement with the school. The school would be on an extended day schedule with club activities and a homework center. The Apple Charter School's board of directors includes a local judge, nonprofit leaders, a former local school district board candidate, and concerned parents.

Carolina Preparatory Academy

Carolina Preparatory Academy is scheduled to open in the fall of 2009, and would be open to at-risk, low-income children who live in the area surrounding the former Charleston Naval Base in North Charleston; the school will be housed on the former military base. The school would teach approximately 150 K-third-grade students, and would add one grade each year through the 12th grade. This is a college-prep school, which would eventually expand to 700 students. Class size would be capped at 18, with each student receiving a laptop computer.

The Charleston Institute for Civic Engagement and International Studies

The Charleston Institute's goal is to teach its 800 students four different languages before they graduate. It's scheduled to open in the fall of 2009 with pre-kindergarten through ninth grades, with an additional grade being added each year; class size would be capped at 15 students per teacher. Each student would start a language immersion program the moment they entered the school. Hiring teachers who can speak a foreign language and teach math, science, and other studies will get immediate hiring preference. Speaking foreign languages throughout the day, in all classes, will be stressed.

Liberal Arts Academy

This liberal studies program is scheduled to open to 800 ninth –12th graders in the fall of 2009. Officials are looking at several site locations, including old Wando High

School. The basis for the school will be alternative learning styles, with an emphasis on student flexibility and individualizing instruction.

Low Country Preparatory Academy

The Low Country Preparatory Academy is scheduled to open in the fall of 2009 and would eventually become Charleston County's first public boarding school. The school would open first with students in kindergarten through sixth grades, followed each year with a boarding school for students from seventh through 12th grades. Students would earn their room and board by working part time in one of the foundation's businesses, thereby learning valuable, real-life experiences along the way. The school would take at-risk children out of their unsafe environments and give them a chance to succeed in life. The curriculum would include humanities, science, arts and crafts, performing arts, foreign language, and physical education. Supporters of the Low Country Preparatory Academy include a local judge, attorney, education specialist, law school instructor, and local residences.

William Edward School of Technology

The school is scheduled to open in the fall of 2009 with a maximum enrollment of 400 K-12th-grade students. It would emphasize technology within its instruction, thereby preparing students for a fast-changing world. Each student would have their own laptop computer and a personal digital assistant and each classroom would use high-tech equipment, like SmartBoards, and most of the student's assignments would be done online. This would be the first school in Charleston County to focus on technology as an instrument for learning.

We included this short chapter to simply illustrate the possibilities available to any forward-thinking person, group, or community. Once we have been freed from the one-size-fits-all approach to educating children, the possibilities become endless. We honestly believe that once a voucher system is put into place, and available money is free to allow other possibilities, a whole new world of educational opportunities will emerge. We, as a collective society, must merely find the will to change and try something else.

Let's not listen to the education monster any further. Let's not listen to the educated elite in this country, for they will surely continue to tell us that there is no other way. We say again, nonsense!!!

There has to be even more alternatives.

Chapter 22

There Has To Be an Alternative

Children's talent to endure stems from their ignorance of alternatives.
– Maya Angelou

To better define the term "alternative education," we look to Wikipedia for the following definition:

> Alternative education, also known as non-traditional education or educational alternative, includes a number of approaches to teaching and learning other than mainstream or traditional education. Educational alternatives are often rooted in various philosophies that are fundamentally different from those of mainstream or traditional education. While some have strong political, scholarly, or philosophical orientations, others are more informal associations of teachers and students dissatisfied with some aspect of mainstream or traditional education. Educational alternatives, which include charter schools, alternative schools, independent schools, and home-based learning, vary widely, but often emphasize the value of small class size, close relationships between students and teachers, and a sense of community.

In reality, alternative education entails the opposite of mainstream public education. And interestingly, alternative education does not advocate a one-size-fits-all approach to educating children. It does not take a brain surgeon to understand that each child is different and, as such, might very well require a different approach to learning. As previously mentioned, our current public education system is nothing more than a factory model for maximizing widget (student) production. However, the factory model for public education is well over 100 years old, and factories today no longer resemble factories from the past. Factories today have incorporated technology and,

as is often the case, account for consumer demands – something the factory model of old seldom considered. Remember Henry Ford's old saying, "You can have any color you want, as long as it is black." Well, that pretty much sums up our belief in today's public education system. "You can have any education you want, as long as it is the same as others."

The one-size-fits-all approach does not take into account a fast changing world of consumer demands. The American consumer has demanded certain things, or it just stops buying. Consequently, these same consumers are not buying into the old widget factory model of education. And we believe this is why larger and larger segments of today's youth are simply giving up and turning away from an educational system that is inherently nonresponsive to a changing world. Like the finicky consumer who chooses to take his or her business elsewhere, today's adults and children are swarming to alternative forms of education, or are just giving up.

Here are but a few of the more popular options immediately available to states and local school boards for disassembling the education monster:

Charter Schools

Charter schools are nothing more than publicly funded schools, although operated independently. In many cases, private funds are allowed by individuals and corporations that wish to change the way learning is often taught, and for the most part, children do well, especially compared to their counterparts in public schools. In the past decade or so, charter schools have sprung up by the hundreds, much to the fanfare of parents and those who support such ideas. Themes vary depending on the goal of each school; some emphasize math, science, or a foreign language, while others emphasize the liberal arts, computer technology, and the trades, like automotive, and carpentry.

We commend the charter school model for its flexibility and adaptation to local and regional problems. This model of learning is immediately available to all states and public school districts, but to date have only been used on a limited basis. We also believe that if and when our current model of public education is dissolved, charter schools will open across this country by the hundreds of thousands; and in many cases will occupy public school buildings, which will be closed due to the fleeing of parents and students who have an alternative.

The state of Minnesota was the first state to pass charter school legislation back in 1991, and since then student numbers have swarmed to more than 28,000. The first charter school in the United States, City Academy, is located in St. Paul, Minnesota, and opened in 1992. The state's structure and guidelines for operating are rather simple:

> Schools are operated independently from the school district in which they are located.
> Schools are incorporated as a 501©(3) nonprofit organization or as a teacher cooperative.
>
> Teachers who have appropriate state licenses staff schools.
>
> Schools are funded primarily by state general education revenue with start-up funding in the first three years provided by the federal government.

Schools are located in leased facilities, funded in large measure by lease aid, a state program that provides per pupil funding to compensate for the fact that charter schools cannot own property, levy taxes, or issue bonds.

Schools are open to all who apply, except if the school is over-subscribed, in which case a lottery is held for all of the students who applied before the deadline. Once a student is enrolled, siblings are given preference in admission.

All schools are free of charge.

Each school is accountable for academic and non-academic outcomes.

A school district, an institution of higher learning, a nonprofit organization, or a foundation can sponsor a school.

Schools are reviewed every three years by the sponsor to determine whether the charter will be renewed.

A board of directors made up of parents, teachers, and community members elected by the school community governs each school.

The only complaint we have with Minnesota's charter school plan is the required testing and the length of three years between renewals of a charter. With the swaying environment of political parties, we believe that no testing should be mandated by the state, although it can be mandated by each charter school, and the length of a school's charter should be expanded to 5-7 years after the first three-year approval cycle.

It is obvious to us that education has become one of the hottest topics in Washington, D.C. Consequently, we believe that for obvious political reasons, testing should be immediately eliminated as a mandate – although each school could very well require a test before graduation.

It should be stressed that these schools must become independent from state structure and free to educate without repercussions from the government goon. If a school is failing to educate a child, and if we have a free and open system in place, a parent or guardian should move the student to another school or another alternative form of educating their child. Isn't this what free market economics is all about – using our "dollar vote"?

Here are a few statistics worthy of our consideration from the Arizona Charter School Association:

The average Arizona charter student per-pupil amount is $7,876, which is well below the national public school average of about $11,000 to $12,000.
The total number of charters schools in the United States is more than 4,000.

The total number of charters in Arizona is 455.

Arizona as a percent of the national total of charters ranks at 11.4%.

The total number of schools in Arizona is 1915.

Charters as a percent of public schools in Arizona rank at 24%.

We find the Arizona model unique. Perhaps because of the state's known independence, at least a quarter of its schools are chartered and are continually growing. It is obvious to us that charter schools are a viable option, especially if taken seriously by a state's legislature. Here are a few more Arizona facts to ponder:

Charter schools are private corporations, either nonprofit or for-profit entities.

A board of directors governs charter schools if they are not-for-profit or by private ownership if they are for profit.

All schools are legislatively required to have a governing body.

The governing body determines the basic policy of the school.

The board of directors, the governing body, or the private owners are not required to place parents or staff on any of the school's boards or governing body.

Teachers and staff are not subject to teacher laws and regulations subject to A.R.S. Title 15, except those specifically written to regulate charter schools such as fingerprinting of personnel.

We again state that independence from normal governing public school structure is the key to success. Here are some more staggering facts:

In math: Charters schools have nine of the top 10 public schools in Maricopa County and eight of the top 10 schools in the entire state of Arizona.

In reading: Charters schools have nine of the top 10 schools in Maricopa County and nine of 10 in the entire state of Arizona.

In writing: Charters schools have nine of the top 10 schools in Maricopa County and eight of the top 10 schools in the entire state of Arizona.

Needless to say, there is a stark difference between the performances of charter schools and public schools in the state of Arizona; this is why we advocate the usage of charter schools as one of the major solutions to solving the problem with today's public schools. However, there are other successful ideas as well.

Privileged Private, Free Market Freedom and Victory Voucher Schools

Privileged private, free market freedom and victory voucher have been clumped together into one simple section, only because they align with each other so closely. In essence, open competition and free market vouchers give choice to parents and students to attend private schools and can be offered to other alternative types of educational schools, like online schools and homeschoolers.

It should be mentioned that Milton Friedman first declared the idea of vouchers in the 1950s as a way to solve the problems with public schools. The idea never really took off at the time because for the most part, the public school system had overwhelming support from the American public. Not so today.

Private schools have even greater flexibility than those of charter schools and in many cases can offer religious teachings. We are not supporting a particular belief, however, we are advocating the moral option to those parents who desire such teachings – something we believe is severely lacking in today's public school system.

Yet, private schools do not necessarily mean religion. Rather, private schools, like charter schools, can emphasize a particular course of study or learning method, like Montessori or Waldorf schools; or perhaps Friends schools or free schools like Sands School, Summerhill School and Sudbury Valley School. Schools could be set up like open classroom schools, which are based on experimental learning. They can also be set up to teach an international curriculum, like International Baccalaureate and Round Square schools. We also know of private schools that offer Associate of Arts College degrees for those students who know they are going to college. There are no limits to the types of private schools that can be developed.

We also contend that if public funding was made available for private schools through an open voucher system, private schools would, like charter schools, open by the hundreds of thousands.

You see, all that is needed is the desire to let public funds be freed from the education monster's control. The private sector would quickly adapt to filling any void, but only if no major restrictions were placed on such funding, which the education monster and her allies will surely try to influence.

Wisconsin is one of the more progressive states when it comes to the usage of vouchers. Here are some astounding statistics to ponder from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction:

> In January 2008, there were 120 private schools participating, with a total enrollment of 18,882 students.
>
> In the 2007-08 school year, the state aid for a student enrolled full time was $6,501.
>
> The program was estimated to cost more than $120 million in 2007-08.
>
> Graduation rates increased from 36% to 67% when vouchers were used in the worst public school districts, which is near the national average.

Howard Fuller from Marquette University stated the following facts about Milwaukee's voucher program in 2008:

> Critics claim vouchers are a failure because test results showed little improvement over public schools.
> Nevertheless, these critics have not given the program enough time to fully develop; thus, the true impact of the program is not fully known yet.
> The savings to taxpayers, however, has been enormous, with the average cost of a voucher to be $6,501, where the average cost to educate a public school child is $11,885 per student.
>
> The majority of parents who participated in the program overwhelmingly approved of the voucher program and feel their children now have a fighting chance.

Fewer parents were worried about school violence.

Seventy-seven percent of parents surveyed liked the voucher program.

Teacher quality is just as high as in public schools.

The estimated average household income of each voucher recipient was about $23,000.

The Center for Education Reform shared some interesting facts as well:

Nationwide, there are now 24 school choice programs in 15 states.

In 2008, new choice programs have been enacted in Florida, Georgia, and Louisiana.

School choice is increasingly becoming a bipartisan issue, with three quarters of legislative victories over the past two years resulting because of Democratic support.

In spite of national Democratic and Republican bi-partisan support across this country, California Democrats have a stranglehold on public education funds and are unwilling to support any progressive change.

The state of California also has 90 failing school districts, like Compton where less than 4% of eighth graders were proficient in math (sixth and seventh grade standards) and less than 10% of 11th graders were proficient in language arts in 2007.

It is clear to us that as a minimum, vouchers work. They give parents and students hope, they instill discipline and safety into the school environment, and they save the taxpayer a great deal of money. And we believe in time, student scores will increase. However, we do not think test scores should be the only gauge for determining the success of a school. Not every student should be expected to go to college; some students would prefer to be plumbers or mechanics, or beauticians and homemakers. The idea that our schools should determine the course of a student's life is wrong; it should be a family's decision, not the educated elite in this country.

And finally, we believe that funding for a voucher system should be equal to a districts public school funding, thereby guaranteeing full participation by this country's poorest communities and by minorities – this would allow private and charter schools the option to offer many of the programs that are available in public schools, like busing, after school programs, meals, and special needs.

Homeschool Hero

We believe that the homeschool hero is a great option for those parents who want to experience the joy of teaching their own children. Basically, the homeschool option is used when parents want direct involvement in their own children's learning and developmental growth. The sudden interest and growth of homeschooling has been a direct result of the monopolistic control by the education monster. With no other option than to send their child to a failing public school system, parents by the millions have turned to homeschooling their children.

We believe in the value of homeschooling for those parents who want to take on the overwhelming responsibility for educating their children. However, with that said, we also believe that once the education monster has been defeated and public funds have been freed for alternative forms of education, this now popular option will once again become a secondary alternative for most parents.

You see, parents primarily homeschool their children because their state and local school district has failed to adequately educate this country's children. Once faith has been reestablished in our educational system, and unrestricted options are given to concerned parents, the homeschool option will slowly decline in popularity. We will, however, say that for some individuals, primarily religious ones, they still might maintain this option, especially if stringent regulations are placed upon the parents or the school.

Here are some facts about homeschooling from *Exploring Homeschooling* by Brian D. Ray, Ph.D.:

General Facts and Trends on Homeschooling

> Homeschooling may be the fastest-growing form of education in the United States (growing at 7% to 12% per year).
>
> Home-based education is also growing around the world in many nations.
>
> There are about 2 million homeschool students in the United States.
>
> There were an estimated 1.9 to 2.4 million children (in grades K to 12) home educated during 2005-2006 in the United States.
>
> Families engaged in home-based education are not dependent on public, tax-funded resources for their children's education.
>
> The finances associated with their homeschooling likely represent more than $16 billion that taxpayers do not have to spend since these children are not in public schools.
>
> Homeschooling is quickly growing in popularity among minorities.
>
> About 15% of homeschool families are non-white/non Hispanic (i.e., not white/Anglo).
>
> A demographically wide variety of people homeschool – these are atheists, Christians, and Mormons; conservatives, libertarians, and liberals; low-, middle-, and high-income families; Black, Hispanic, and white; parents with Ph.D.s, GEDs, and no high-school diplomas.

Reasons for Home Educating

The most common reasons given for homeschooling are the following:

> Teach a particular set of values, beliefs, and world view.
>
> Accomplish more academically than in schools.

Customize or individualize the curriculum and learning environment for each child.

Use pedagogical approaches other than those typical in institutional schools.

Enhance family relationships between children and parents and among siblings.

Provide guided and reasoned social interactions with youthful peers and adults.

Provide a safer environment for children and youth, because of physical violence, drugs and alcohol, psychological abuse, and improper and unhealthy sexuality.

Academic Performance

The home educated typically score 15 to 30 percentile points above public-school students on standardized academic achievement tests.
Homeschool students score above average on achievement tests regardless of their parents' level of formal education or their family's household income.

Whether homeschool parents were ever certified teachers is not related to their children's academic achievement.

The degree of state control and regulation of homeschooling is not related to academic achievement.

Home-educated students typically score above average on the SAT and ACT tests that colleges consider for admissions.

Homeschool students are increasingly being actively recruited by colleges.
Social, Emotional, and Psychological Development

The home educated are doing well, typically above average, on measures of social, emotional, and psychological development.

Research measures include peer interaction, self-concept, leadership skills, family cohesion, participation in community service, and self-esteem.

Homeschool students are regularly engaged in social and educational activities outside their homes and with people other than their nuclear-family members.

They are commonly involved in activities such as field trips, scouting, 4-H, political drives, church ministry, sports teams, and community volunteer work.

Success in the "Real World" of Adulthood

The research base on adults who were home educated is growing; thus far it indicates that they:

Participate in local community service more frequently than do the general population.

Vote and attend public meetings more frequently than the general population, and

Go to and succeed at college at an equal or higher rate than the general population.

In conclusion, we think the homeschool alternative is a great option for those parents that want to spend the time educating their own children. We do not think, however, this type of education should be undertaken if quality time is not spent with a child, especially in the formative years.

There are now about 29 states that offer the homeschool-high school option, where more self-learning is supervised by the state. This is another option for those families who do not mind intrusion into their household and lifestyle. It should be mentioned, though, the key to homeschooling's success has been the separation between state mandates and individualizing a child's education. Therefore, as we have mentioned previously, giving the state control of a child's education is no change at all. To truly change the course of the education monster's control over children, it must not have any direct control over a family's decision about their child's course of study. The state's rights over what a child is taught should be the most basic in nature – perhaps just the three Rs: reading, writing, and arithmetic. If a family or guardian wants a special emphasis, like religion, language, math, writing, poetry, carpentry, plumbing, or training to be a beautician, the state should have no say in the matter. And most important of all, we believe that the education of this nation's children should primarily lie with parents and guardians – the state itself should only enforce the idea that a child is being educated, not in what fashion. This is a fine line, we know, but it is necessary for the welfare and success of our children, which is this nation's future.

Blended Learning

Blended learning is, in essence, the combining of traditional classroom instruction with Internet instruction. In an environment of a declining economy, this type of learning might hold some promise. In fact, several colleges are already incorporating the blended learning option. It allows students to meet an instructor and fellow students, then go back to their homes and complete much of their study and work. It makes the impersonal online study a little more personal. We believe this type of coursework might be very effective for high school students, but have some major reservations when it comes to students in the lower grades.

Blended learning can be as simple as meeting at the start of the semester, for each test, and at the end of the course. Or it can be where a teacher meets once a month, or once a week; the course can be structured based on the material to be learned and the length of the semester.

The best part of this type of learning is it involves technology. Students and their teacher communicate by e-mail and chat sessions, assignments are done on the computer and transferred through the online classroom. Normally, very accurate records are kept, so if any problems arise, an administrator can look and see what occurred. Students and administrators love this type of teaching, but most teachers are still hesitant.

We have asked this question from time to time, why aren't cameras placed in traditional classrooms, especially if so many behavioral problems exist? Each and every time, the response is the teachers and the teachers' unions don't want them – case closed. Well, blended learning, like total online learning, creates an environment of accountability for all. This includes teachers and students. If an assignment was not graded on time, the teacher can be held accountable and, likewise, if a student did not complete an assignment on time, he or she is also held accountable. All assignments are downloaded into a database, so there are no lost homework assignments and no more blaming each other.

Also, blended learning creates an environment of structure. Assignments can normally be downloaded any time of the day, work can be completed anytime of the day, and teachers can grade assignments any time of the day.
We know, we have heard this all too often, students do not have computers or access to them. We say nonsense. Here are some interesting statistics about the Internet (Pew Internet & American Life):

> Twenty percent of today's college students began using computers between the ages of 5 and 8. By the time they were 16 to 18 years old, all of today's current college students had begun using computers – and the Internet was commonplace in the world in which they lived.
>
> Eighty-six percent of college students have gone online, compared with 59% of the general population.
>
> College students are frequently looking at their e-mail, with 72% checking e-mail at least once a day.
>
> The great majority (85%) of college students own their own computer, and two thirds (66%) use at least two e-mail addresses.
>
> Seventy-eight percent of college Internet users say that at one time or another they have gone online just to browse for fun, compared to 64% of all Internet users.
>
> College Internet users are twice as likely to have ever downloaded music files when compared to all Internet users: 60% of college Internet users have done so compared to 28% of the overall population.
>
> College Internet users are twice as likely to use instant messaging on any given day compared to the average Internet user.
>
> Nearly four-fifths of college students (79%) agree that Internet use has had a positive impact on their college academic experience.
> Almost half (46%) of college students agree that e-mail enables them to express ideas to a professor that they would not have expressed in class, but some interactions are still primarily face-to-face.
>
> Nearly three-quarters (73%) of college students say they use the Internet more than the library, while only 9% said they use the library more than the Internet for information searching.
>
> About half of all college students (48%) are required to use the Internet to contact other students in at least some of their classes.

Two-thirds (68%) of college students reported subscribing to one or more academic-oriented mailing lists that relate to their studies.

More than half (58%) of college students have used e-mail to discuss or find out a grade from an instructor.

Nearly two-thirds (65%) of college students who e-mail professors say they report absences via e-mail.
Forty-two percent of college students say they use the Internet primarily to communicate socially.

Only 10% of college students use the Internet primarily for entertainment.

Nearly three-fourths (72%) of college students say most of their online communication is with friends.

Eighty-five percent of college students consider the Internet to be an easy and convenient choice for communicating.

A significant number of college students use publicly accessible computers on campus even when they have their own computer at their disposal.

We used the college model to help explain how this new technology is being used on college campuses across the country, and how these young adults have quickly and willingly adapted to this type of learning.

We think that adapting this technology into overcrowded high schools could be used to help eliminate the building of new schools, which would save billions of dollars. As a high school ages, a school district could adapt such a system instead of building a new school. Think about the savings in heating, air conditioning, electrical, and building upkeep. Instead, high schools would house administrative offices and computer labs. Classrooms would be limited and rotated as needed for student and teacher testing and limited gatherings. Just think about the cost savings to school districts, private schools, or charter schools. Teachers could be hired on a yearly basis, and they, too, would be able to work from their own homes.

Before dismissing such claims, think about the possible cost savings, especially if an economic crisis should hit this country. There would be less need to bus students, no need to build newer and bigger schools, and schools would no longer remain the #1 learning ground for social ill behavior. This option could be just as viable in rural farming areas as inner city slums.

Could it be possible that the reason minority schools do so poorly is because of their lack of access to the Internet? With that question, we suggest, especially if a school district is going to a blended learning or Internet type of instruction that each student be issued a basic computer, which can now be gotten for a few hundred dollars. These basic computers have e-mail and Internet access, but not enough memory to play computer games. We also suggest that each school district develop accessible computer labs throughout the day, with staff on hand to aid willing students. These labs could also hire full-time tutors, who could help students online as well as at the lab on a scheduled basis. And for those students who might fall into the poorest of categories, we suggest implementing a grant system, whereby families can apply for direct aid for access to the Internet in a student's home. This simple and inexpensive approach will open the child to a completely new world.

Optional Online Learning

We believe that optional online learning is another great alternative, especially for high school students. It really makes sense to consider the high school option for those students who adapt well to this type of learning. It is cost effective and can be easily adapted to the homeschool child and in upper grades to a traditional high school setting. Unlike blended learning, which requires a student and teacher to meet several times a semester, online learning truly opens up the world. In fact, it is not uncommon for college students to have a teacher in another part of the world, and have students from countless locations.

The cost savings are monumental and the availability and quality of teacher instruction is even higher than that of most public schools. In fact, many colleges enjoy the luxury of hiring adjunct teachers for a single class, who might not otherwise be able to teach. At first glance, one might think this is a problem, but not really. There are some incredible professionals who do not have the time to teach full time. They, like their students, already have jobs and families and are constrained to evening and weekend teaching, which online learning allows. You see, online learning gives the student and teacher the freedom to learn and teach from remote locations around the world at different times of the day or night.

We honestly believe that the high school online option should be included in any future discussion. As we have mentioned previously, the quality of online classes are in most cases better and even harder than traditional classroom settings, and we believe such classes better prepare those students who are adaptable to such a learning environment for the future. Let's face it, there is no stopping the Internet and how business and government will use this tool in the future. Whether we like it or not, the computer and Internet are here to stay, so we say, jump on board and enjoy the ride!

Right now, many states offer the online homeschool option, and we believe this will, in time, become one of the prime avenues for those parents who want better control of their children's education.

The Teaching Company

We would be remiss by not mentioning a private company that caters to many concerned parents who like to supplement their child's education at home. The Teaching Company, like perhaps hundreds of other educational companies, is illustrated here to make the point that many companies have been coveting concerned parents for decades, and, we might add, prospering.
The Teaching Company, in essence, has certain courses on CD, video cassette, and cassettes for students to watch and listen to before attending college or during college. The courses are normally given by some of this country's best college professors and high school teachers and offer students a glimpse into a course of study before taking a regular or online class. Of interest, we know of several homeschool parents who purchased these courses to better supplement their student's course of study. We have no personal interest in The Teaching Company, or know of anyone at the company. We do, however, like to mention great teaching tools when they become known.

Here are but a few of their professors:

Patrick N. Allitt, Ph.D., University of California at Berkeley; professor at Emory University; teaches History of the United States, 2nd Edition.

Frank Cardulla, M.S., University of Illinois; Retired teacher from Niles North High School, Chicago, Illinois; teaches High School Chemistry.

Jeffrey L. Kasser, Ph.D., University of Michigan, Ann Arbor; professor at North Carolina State University; teaches Philosophy of Science.

William Kloss, M.A., Oberlin College; works as an independent art historian, The Smithsonian Associates, Smithsonian Institution; teaches Genius of Michelangelo & Great Artists of the Italian Renaissance.

Monica Neagoy, Ph.D., University of Maryland; works at National Science Foundation; teaches High School Algebra I.

John J. Renton, Ph.D., West Virginia University; professor at West Virginia University; teaches Nature of Earth: An Introduction to Geology.

Elizabeth Vandiver, Ph.D., The University of Texas at Austin; teaches at Whitman College; teaches Great Authors of the Western Literary Tradition.

These are but a few of the hundreds of teachers, available courses, and areas of study. We commend The Teaching Company and those teachers who had the wisdom to give their time, effort, and money to helping students learn independently of the education monster and its controlling interest in suppressing America's young minds.

Cooperatives

While writing this book a great question was asked, "How can these smaller charter, private, online and even public schools, which would be supported by vouchers, bring the same level of extracurricular activities that larger schools now offer?"

After a little brainstorming and several discussions, we offer this possible solution. We know of several small colleges around this country that have maintained academic independence, yet combined resources to better offer activities that college students want. The most notable examples are the four colleges Claremont-Mudd and Pomona-Pitzer, which are located in Southern California. In essence, these colleges combined to offer sports and recreational activities for their students, although they remained independent.

We suggest that charter, private, online, and even public schools that are close to each other consider combining after-school sports programs under one cooperative umbrella for the purpose of fielding athletic teams, cheerleaders, band, etc. These sister schools will inherently allow smaller schools to field athletic teams, but at the same time permit them to maintain their primary goal of academic excellence.

Additionally, if these cooperatives want to expand programming to include other activities, like dances or concerts, the option is always available. And eventually, if enough like-minded thinkers decide, they could even combine or relocate campuses to aid these combined programs. The possibilities are endless.
In sum, we believe that one of the biggest drawbacks for young men and women attending school is a lack of prospects. These children and their families do not see the possibilities available to them. By first breaking the stranglehold of the education

monster's control of public funding, we break the back of what is holding back the United States from moving forward.

Secondly, by allowing the same proportional amounts of money to be used as a voucher to any type of school a parent wants to send their child, we create an environment for progressive change. This system puts the responsibility squarely on the parent(s) or guardians, where it belongs. The state's only responsibility is to know that a child is being educated and pay for that education – at the same amount they are currently paying to harbor mediocrity within a failed public school system. So if and when a child fails, the state can no longer be blamed; instead, the student's failure will be placed where it belonged all along, on the parent(s) or guardian and the student.

Accountability should be limited to student enrollment; the state should not be directly involved in curriculum structure. No state-mandated tests should ever be administered; however, this does not mean charter schools, private schools, or online institutions cannot create their own requirements for a diploma, which could include a graduation test. We believe that learning comes in many forms, and that each school should be allowed to create a formula for their own success, and or possible failure.

Dr. Garvey laid out our ideals in a simple and understandable fashion:

> Vouchers empower parents to take their children out of a failing school and enroll them in a successful charter, private, online, or public school, or give funding to homeschool parents for a curriculum of their choice.
>
> Charter schools empower the principal and the faculty to operate their own school and ignore a district's school board as well as the state's education code (We again state that this successful approach should be broadened to include all schools under a voucher program).
>
> Homeschooling empowers parents to teach their children at home.
>
> Distance learning empowers students to learn at their own pace, decide when they want to turn on the computer to learn, and learn at home, or in a library, on a desktop, or at Starbucks on a laptop.
>
> Blended learning empowers students to enroll in online courses and enjoy face-to-face communication with the teacher.

All of the above empower parents and students and will, in our opinion, break the back of a monopolistic public school system that honestly believes it is the only solution and keeps our children shackled to a failed scheme.

A totally open voucher system will be the beginning to alternative educational reform. With a voucher in hand, parents and students can start to look elsewhere for educational opportunities, and in a short time, private enterprises will open by the hundreds of thousands; charter, private, and online schools will immediately come, if we only ask them.

We say, open the floodgates and let success flow!

Chapter 23

Privatize Public Education by Boycotting It

In large states, public education will always be mediocre,
for the same reason that in large kitchens the cooking is usually bad.
– Friedrich Nietzsche

There is little doubt in our minds that one of the biggest education debates today is the issue of privatizing public education. And for many people, the only thing holding back this move is a sound plan for transferring a failed system into a winning one.

For the education monster, this idea has become public enemy #1. You see, the system surrounding public education is huge; it is mammoth, well beyond most people's comprehension. Some might say that our asking for the destruction of an American institution is foolhardy at best or dangerous at worst. We believe, however, that it is this fear that keeps the education monster in control, in spite of its continued failure.

So, can private enterprise solve what ails our public schools?
We think so. Now mind you, we do not assume to have all the answers, we would never be so presumptuous to think that – unlike the education monster and the educated elite who consider themselves worthy of this distinction.

We, on the other hand, think the federal government needs to get out of the education business; that is, unless it also wants to promote its own alternative forms of education in a free market environment. The federal government could set up or fund

its own charter schools if it wanted to, but it should not dictate a universal plan like No Child Left Behind ever again.

States could also free themselves from a one-size-fits-all approach to educating children by relinquishing control to local school districts, charter schools, private schools, and online schools by setting up a free market for public education. As mentioned previously, the state already pays to educate a child in a failed system; consequently, it would be real easy to simply shift money from public schools to charter, private, and online schools and even homeschoolers, thereby creating a force for free market competition.

Yes, we have heard about the disruption to public schools argument; well, again we say, so what! We have no sympathy for teachers and administrators who have continued to support a failed system. These teachers and administrators know well the system is broken, but they keep going along to get ahead. We say sorry, but you will have to find a new job within the new system, or transform your local public school into a successful charter school that competes with the private sector. The free ride is over, or at least we hope so.

We have laid out several options within this book, many of which already come with their own unique sets of success stories. Managing such a system can be as simple or as difficult as each state chooses. We, of course, recommend keeping any system for public education simple and easy for most Americans to want to join; otherwise, the education monster will creep its head back into the education game.

There are hundreds of thousands of wonderful and motivated teachers and administrators who honestly want to make a difference, but are hampered by a bureaucratic system that stifles ideas, as well as student and teacher enthusiasm. The word "can't" is a word that should seldom be administered; instead, the statement, "Let's find a way," should be shouted from the rooftops every time a child asks a question.

Getting there will not be easy, but a first step must, at some point, be taken. Parents must demand change; they must stop sending their children to bad schools and blaming others for their child's failure.

We recommend that those parents who want to pull their children out of public schools, do so, at any age, but only if they can afford to do so and have the overwhelming desire to spend quality time with their children. Homeschooling is only successful when parents spend a great deal of time with their children – we truly believe parents should never homeschool their child unless they are willing to spend quality time with them.

We like the homeschool option first and foremost as a weapon for future change. We are calling for those parents who can to pull their children out of public schools and homeschool them, especially high school children. Not every parent can afford to educate their child through private schools and not every community has a charter school, but every parent who has the will and means can buy a curriculum for a few hundred dollars and educate their child at home. If parents did this by the millions, adding to the already 2 million known homeschooled children, we believe the education monster would have to submit to our demands for a new course for educating America's children.

In addition, some states offer homeschool programs free. We are only asking for high school ages to be homeschooled, unless parents are at home with the child, because,

we believe, such ages could easily adapt to this type of environment with little instruction from parents who must work.

The noticeable difference between junior high school enrollment and high school enrollment would send shock waves through the public school structure. Teachers and administrators would be laid off in droves and investigations into what occurred would be undertaken in earnest.

Moreover, for those parents who cannot afford to do these prevailing options, or choose not to do them, we offer another powerful alternative. We suggest boycotting the first week of each school semester. Remember, public schools must take a child, even if the child is enrolled late.

We have a particular concern for minority and poor students who are obviously suffering at a greater level than most other American public school students. Homeschooling is perhaps an impossible task for many of this country's poorest areas. With this said, we strongly suggest, as just mentioned, that you do not register or have your child attend the first week of public school each semester. Do not answer your phone, go visit family, just do something other than attend the first week of public school each semester. Your silence and your child's non-attendance will speak louder than anything any one parent or child could ever do.

If, on the other hand, a student is taken out of school during the year, after enrollment, this is cause for a lowering of the student's grade and other punishments the school system has designed to keep children and parents motivated to attend.

Just think about the possibilities. If half of a school's student body did not show up the first week of school, a tremor would be heard around your school district. School administrators would shiver in fright, much like the British Empire shrieked when Mahatma Gandhi conducted his nonviolent protests in India.

In conclusion, we hope you have enjoyed reading this publication, and expect you will now take up the cause of destroying the education monster and retaking control of this nation's education system by use of free market solutions and empowering parents.

About the Authors

Jim Garvey and Hank Kraychir have been friends for several years and have two things in common. First is their love for the University of Southern California and second, their love for education. These interests and the friendship that resulted led to countless discussions about the decline of public education and a possible solution to this country's educational problems. The end result is this book, *Destruction of the Education Monster*.

Jim Garvey

Jim Garvey, Ed.D, was born in 1922 to immigrant parents from Ireland. He was one of seven children, with two older sisters and four younger brothers.

Garvey's early education certainly impacted his career choice and his love for education. He attended Immaculate Conception first – eighth grades, and Saint Michael's ninth – 12th grades, both of which were very small Catholic schools in Massachusetts in the 1930s. Grades first through eighth were run by four nuns in four classrooms and grades ninth through 12th also had four nuns and a priest who taught religion. Both schools were modest by today's scale and served a poor community of immigrants in which he lived. Saint Michael's had only two sports teams, basketball and soccer, and no other after-school activities. There were no school buses, with each student walking to school, in some cases several miles each day.

After graduating from high school, he attended Westfield State Teachers College for three years, which only had five instructors at the time and Bridgewater State Teachers College for one year, which only had 10 instructors. During his 1943 senior year, he was called up for active duty with the Army Air Corps, where he served with distinction to the end of the war as a pilot in Europe. He flew 30 successful missions over Germany during World War II and was never shot down.
After the war, he immediately got married in 1945 and drove to California where he sold stocks and bonds to make ends meet. While working full time and supporting a family, he attended the University of Southern California, where he earned a state

teaching certificate and started teaching in 1950. While teaching, he continued his love for education and eventually earned a master's and doctorate degree in education from USC. These advanced degrees eventually led him out of public school teaching and into administration. Garvey slowly worked himself up through the public school system, first as a teacher, then a vice principal and principal, and eventually as an assistant superintendent, followed by being a superintendent for more than 24 years. He retired from public school administration in 1972 and taught as an adjunct professor at Chapman College, Pepperdine University, and USC between 1965 and 1980.

During his tenure as an academic professor, he earned the respect of his colleagues for his honest and forthright opinions about the state of public education and its slow decline. He has published five articles in education journals, and became a prime advocate for educational reform, where he spoke openly at conferences throughout the state of California.

In 1970, Garvey and his colleague, Dr. Braughtagam, developed an audio-visual aid kit called "Writing Objectives to Improve Instruction," which was used nationally as a public school instructional manual for teachers.

Dr. Garvey is now 85 years old and lives a vibrant and active life. He enjoys reading about current educational events and stays active with his new love, online learning.

And lastly, he can't make up his mind about what he wants on his tombstone, but has two possibilities: "Even now, I hate algebra," or "If I had my life to live over, I'd live over a delicatessen."

Hank Kraychir

Hank Kraychir, M.Ed., was born in 1960 into a troubled family, yet by age 12, he was adopted, which eventually gave him the guidance he needed to become a good student and exceptional athlete. He graduated from high school in 1979, where he won the California State High School discus title. While attending Long Beach City College in 1982, he won California State Junior College shot put and discus titles and set a state record in the shot put, whereupon he earned an athletic scholarship to USC. He became a four-time all-American in his two years at USC and became known for his ambidextrous throwing abilities. Kraychir made one United States national team in 1985 before retiring because of an elbow injury.

After a successful throwing career, he entered the coaching arena, where he became an assistant coach at Long Beach City College, Mt. San Antonio Junior College, and Cal Poly Pomona University. All the while, he also became a successful businessman, which led to his early retirement in 2005.

Kraychir now writes and coaches his children, who are successful throwers in their own right. His oldest son, Trevor, earned an athletic scholarship to Boise State University for his incredible grades and his fifth furthest all time high school weight throw of 81'4" in 2007. His other son, Trent, also gained distinction for his fourth furthest all time high school hammer throw of 244'3", and his daughter, Casey, won the USATF Junior National hammer title and threw a high school junior class hammer record of 190'3" in 2009; while his youngest daughter, Katie, also established the fifth

furthest all-time 20-pound weight throw, 60'1.5", while winning the inaugural California high school state indoor track and field championship in 2010.

Kraychir also continued his love for education. He and his wife, Debbie, home-schooled their four children up to their entry into high school, and while working full time, homeschooling and coaching, he eventually earned three master's degrees – a master's degree in education from Jones International University, a master's degree in liberal studies from Excelsior College, and a master's degree in military history from Norwich University.

Kraychir is also a published author of several books, which includes *USC Athletic Stories, Volumes I, II, & III, Cal Athletic Stories, Stanford Athletic Stories, Boise Athletic Stories* and *Chief John Ross: Opportunist of the American Civil War.*

Because of his firsthand experiences with homeschooling and online education, Kraychir brings a unique perspective to this discussion. His children have been homeschooled, spend a short time in a private school and public schools; as such, his firsthand parental observations, life experiences, and education all come together in this book.

About the Artist

Makoto Hashigami resides in Tokyo, Japan, but is known around the world for his artistic talents. Makoto was first introduced to the United States at age 10, where in 1975, he lived in New York City for three years. This early introduction into American culture has had a great influence on Hashigami, and as he continues to travel the world, he demonstrates this early impact through his artistic works.

While in Los Angeles, Hashigami discovered the flavor of Southern Californian mural, graffiti, and billboard art. Hashigami feels the mural art form is a great medium to demonstrate a culture's values, history, and worth.

Hashigami also just finished his "Spirit of Mara" mural in Twentynine Palms, California. His mural depicts a Native American woman thanking the Great Spirit for the Oasis of Mara's valuable water.

About the Editor

And Our Trusted Editor
Dawne Brooks

Dawne Brooks is a five-star editor for Editavenue.com, and a former development editor for Pearson Education/Prentice Hall publishers. She's also held positions as a managing editor at Chicago's *Word of Mouth* magazine, as an editor and designer at the *North County Times* newspaper in southern California, and as a writer and editor for NYC's *Downtown Brooklyn Review*. She holds a bachelor's degree in journalism from San Diego State University.